Sixfold Adventures

A Collection of One-Shots

Choose_The_Adventure

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Prompt Page (Closed Permanently)

This is where I'll be taking prompts for

Osomatsu-san only

short stories!

You are welcome to write in the comment section of a scenario or an idea of what you'd like to see written, including any relationships, scenes, alternate universes (AU), or other situations.

When your comments come in, I will reach out to you at my earliest convenience to gather more information if I find something unclear.

This is something that I'm offering without compensation to expand my writing skills and imagination and, as such,

I retain the right to refuse my skills should I find your scenario inappropriate.

Should I agree to move forward with your scenario/prompt, do not badger me for a publishing date. I will message you privately when I begin work on your prompt and then again when it is finished.

I write the reader character as a female by default. If you wish this to change, make it clear in the prompt.

Head-canon ABC's

I saw this template in another

story and

I really liked the idea of jotting down my

head-canon

for the sextuplets when they're facing or dealing with different scenarios. Each letter has a small defining description and six individual responses from each brother.

Credit for the base template goes to

the-coldest-goodbye on Tumblr

. I have exchanged some of the terms (as I found them to be repetitive).

Affection

(How affectionate are they? How do they show affection?)

- The oldest sextuplet shows his affection for you in both public and private settings, often to your chagrin. His favorite thing to do is kiss your neck from behind while ensuring that you feel how excited he is.

- More of a gentleman than his brothers, Karamatsu would only show his affection for you in public when you gave him approval, ensuring to never go farther than holding hands. In private, though, he did everything in his power to remind you that you were his.

- Much more timid than any of his brothers, Choromatsu would be petrified for the first few months or years of your relationship, unable to force himself to brush against your shoulder or hold your hand. You would take

the lead in showing him affection, slowly bringing down the walls until he began reciprocating.

- Ichimatsu is the hardest nut to crack when it comes to affection, nearly retreating into himself every time your hands touch or shoulders bump. You always feel the need to ask permission before doing anything further than looking at him, but before long, he's the one initiating holding hands.

- You can barely ask the question to hold hands before Jyushimatsu is glomping you, his momentum throwing you both on the floor in laughter. This brother is overly enthusiastic about showing his affection towards you, more often than not acting on it at inappropriate times.

- The youngest brother is more conservative than the others, taking things in stride and allowing actions to progress naturally. He would start with holding your hand in public before progressing to anything else...with or without permission, depending on how many boundaries you've set into place.

Bestie

(What would they be like as a best friend? How would the friendship start?)

- You would discover that he would only bother you when he needed money, alcohol, or a smoking buddy (which was very often). If you didn't smoke, he would still invite you to hang out in a more open space so that you wouldn't be as bothered by the secondhand smoke. The beginning action of this friendship was an accident: you had dropped your wallet when rifling through your belongings. Osomatsu returned it after passing you and seeing it laying on the ground. He insisted that there was nothing missing (which there wasn't) and you had repaid his kindness with a drink.

- The second eldest is more cautious around you than you thought he would be, stuttering his answer of why whenever you asked (making you realize that he didn't have as much experience with strangers as he claimed). You would pass by his musical session in the park, wincing a little at his forced singing, but thoroughly enjoying his guitar playing. Karamatsu had thanked

you every time you left a tip, eventually asking your name and seeing if you would be free to go to a bar.

- You actually met this sextuplet at a Nyaa-chan concert when her popularity began taking off, pushing your way to the front and shouting every word you knew. After attending a few dozen concerts, you realized that Choromatsu was at every single one and wanted to meet another superfan. With the commonality of Nyaa-chan as the foundation, Choromatsu quickly began to open up to you about what his dreams were and how he thought the idol was simply amazing. You would meet weekly to talk about everything Nyaa-chan and show off your collections to each other, slapping him (or joining him) when he attempted to look up any of the figure's skirts.

- This reclusive and enigmatic sextuplet would be hard to befriend...if you didn't have the same interests as him. Your shared love of cats and their wellbeing would make you close friends, both of you meeting at your place to feed the feral colony nearby before heading to his favorite alley and checking on them. It took a few weeks of him warming up to you before he finally said something (a mere 'no' when you asked if he had any plans after the feeding), but you got the sense that Ichimatsu liked listening to you. The friendship you have is difficult as he keeps you away from his home and brothers, but will always find time to come to your place to be with the colony. You've recently discovered that he likes his head scratched.

- As excitable as he is, Jyushimatsu likes to be friends with you because of your steady personality. You've learned to not rile him up too much, staying quiet while he touts on and on about everything that happened since you've last seen each other. When he had exhausted himself for a little bit, you would then tell your part and he would listen intently. You've only interrupted him twice since you became friends (on accident both times) and quickly realized that it devolves into a shouting match as you both try to talk over each other. You had also tried to calm him down to a 'normal' level, but recognized that he likes the way he is. As for how you two became friends, neither of you are completely sure. It just happened.

- You met at a mixer, unsurprisingly. None of the people there really fit the bill for what you were looking for and decided to talk to Todomatsu since

he also seemed disinterested, finding it harder than you thought to get his attention away from his phone. When you asked for his number, he refused to give it to you until you told him that you wanted someone to rant at for how many miserable dates you'd been on. Totty would always reply to you, stating that he was sorry that most people were disgusting or offering to pay for drinks should the date have gone horribly. You find him to be a reliable shoulder when you need comforting, Todomatsu always arrives at your place in a timely manner with your favorite drink and food.

Caress

(Do they like to have physical contact? How would they hold you?)

- This man cannot keep his hands off of you. Osomatsu is daring with his touches, constantly pushing the boundaries that you've placed when you inevitably grow irritated from his constant nuzzles and nips in public. Despite all of this, he won't touch you inappropriately unless you ask.

- This is someone who would ask for permission to do anything with you, even if it's just to hold hands. He would be nervous at first until you've reassured him multiple times that you wouldn't bite his head off.

- He's actually extremely shy about physical contact, apologizing if his shoulder barely brushes against yours. Even if you give him permission, Choromatsu would still shy away from it until he's comfortable with the idea...which may take a long time.

- Initially, he doesn't want anything to do with touching you. However, as you both grow closer together, Ichimatsu will let you scratch his head and run his fingers through your hair.

- Hugs for days! In a similar manner to Osomatsu, Jyushimatsu can't keep his hands to himself. He'll always find a way to wrap his arms around your waist, shoulders, arm, leg, anything that he determines is 'unguarded'. He will never push your boundaries, though, reducing the physical contact into a more appropriate gesture, such as hugging your arm to holding your hand.

- With the youngest brother consistently attending mixers and socializing with other people, he has the clearest grasp of what's socially acceptable for physical contact...though, he will constantly tease you verbally by describing what he would rather be doing to you.

Domestic

(Do they want to settle down? How are they at cooking and cleaning?)

- The oldest sextuplet has dreams of settling down and having a child. His homestead skills are severely lacking, though, but he would endeavor to take classes that would help improve them if you were the breadwinner of the marriage.

- Karamatsu has traditional dreams of settling. Find a suitable spouse, marry (with the possibility of children), and work to provide for the house like his father did before him. He would not demand that you stay at home, instead supporting you should you want to work. When you become overwhelmed with housework, he would gladly take over.

- Always wanting to do things correctly, he would pressure you to stay at home to be a housewife at first. Should your wishes go against this, Choromatsu would want to talk about it. He would prefer to be the sole provider, following his father's example, but wouldn't fight against your choice to get a job. He also wouldn't be very talented with housework, leaving stuff to you in fear of burning down the place.

- Ichimatsu would immediately volunteer himself to take care of the house while you worked, easily taking care of all food preparations and chores that cropped up. His meals are always delicious and you've grown fond of the feral colony that resides in your backyard for safety.

- The yellow-clad brother would be hard to pin down, always doing temporary work that demanded everything from him. Should you enter a relationship with him, he would stay at your place, but he wouldn't really contribute to anything but the rent.

- Todomatsu would want to settle down, but he'd rather that both of you have a job to ensure that any emergencies are taken care of by both salaries. The chores and cooking would be traded off between the two of you, depending on how exhausted the workday has left either party.

Ending

(If they had to break up with their partner, how would they do it?)

- As idiotic as the oldest brother can be, Osomatsu knows that it's best to not dance around this subject (as much as he might hate it). Regardless of how this came about, he would make time for it and offer you a drink (your favorite, if possible) before warning you that it's not a happy conversation. There would be no excuses on his part. He wouldn't try to comfort you in any way, but he'd listen to you should you disagree with it. If the break-up is amicable, Osomatsu would see if you'd be okay with meeting up every once in a while to drink and gamble like you had before. If the break-up is volatile, Osomatsu would disappear from your life and warn his brothers about what happened.

- Karamatsu would do everything in his power to ensure that your relationship works out, but when it becomes too much, he'll treat the topic with grace. You would be called to the place where you first met Karamatsu, yet you have a feeling that it's not for a proposal. Both you and Karamatsu would talk things out, explaining how each of you felt about the current relationship (which you would be aware of since he was always wanting to be open with you). He would apologize and ask for forgiveness, saying that he really tried to be the person you thought he was, but he didn't have the strength to continue the relationship anymore. After everything was settled, Karamatsu would only give you an acknowledging nod should you both make eye contact on the street.

- This man would be a nervous wreck, flinching and stuttering whenever your hand brushed against his or when you looked at his eyes. His confession would come out as a shout unintentionally, refusing to look at you while he spoke. You would know that this was coming, though, as his behavior had begun to revert back to before you were friends. He wouldn't want to talk things out, stating that he just wanted some space. You would

oblige (albeit begrudgingly) and notice that he becomes more at ease after breaking up.

- You would have to be the one to end this relationship on his behalf, as Ichimatsu would be too dense to see that both of you were suffering in it. He would become more recluse before you would suggest that the relationship was a bad idea, immediately pinning the blame on himself before you can explain what you're seeing. Ichimatsu would listen to you (despite him not looking at you), understanding everything you're saying before nodding when you had finished. He would admit that having a relationship was harder than he thought, but would state that seeing you thrive was more important to him. Ichimatsu would want to keep your friendship (if you'd allow it), but he wouldn't interact with you anymore should you push him away.

- The fifth brother would want your happiness more than anything else, but if that called for him to step away from you, he would do it. He would find a time that works for you, schedule a meet-up, and tell you everything he likes about you first. Only when he's finished his long list would he say that he doesn't think those can happen while you're together, allowing you to respond. He would encourage you to better yourself, that he would only drag you down, but would still like to meet for 'catch up' chats. If you accept, both of you leave with positive feelings; if you deny what he says, Jyushimatsu will begin to plead with you that this is for the best despite not feeling like it at the moment, and he will leave you should you press even harder to be with him.

- Todomatsu would ask you to come to his workplace to share some coffee, engaging in polite conversation before he brings up the option of breaking up. He makes his opinion clear, that he doesn't see this relationship panning out in the future and he doesn't feel that spark of commonality that originally brought you two together. He wouldn't brush you off, but you would definitely notice that he's not really paying attention to anything you say to try and defend staying in the relationship. Todomatsu would offer to bring you to the next mixer should you agree with the break-up.

Fiancé

(How do they feel about commitment? How quick would they want to get married?)

- 'Commitment' is a scary word for Osomatsu, but the more he gets to know his partner, the more worried he gets about them just leaving at any point. He would take a few years to ask his partner for their hand in marriage.

- Always on the lookout for his 'Karamatsu Girl', he has no qualms with waiting for marriage (his previous marriage with Dobusu was more than enough of a warning). When he meets someone that is willing to be with him and his 'painful' personality, he treats them with the utmost respect and trust, never pushing them into an unwanted marriage. He would love to marry and settle down, but wouldn't want to do it at the expense of his partner.

- Choromatsu would only have his parents as the prime example for marriage, quickly buckling down and getting a well-paying job that earns enough to support him and his future spouse. When the topic of marriage comes up between him and his partner, he would quickly state his desires and downfalls, wanting them to know exactly who they're marrying. More than likely, they would still accept him with all his flaws and Choromatsu would want to be married as soon as possible.

- As reclusive as he is, Ichimatsu wouldn't really entertain the idea of marriage. He would still want to be with someone and possibly have a child with them, but the idea of being bound to them makes him uncomfortable...for now.

- No one can tie this hyperactive man down, not even someone he loves dearly. He will remain with them, work as many jobs as he can, but he won't leave any time to devote himself to his partner. Marriage doesn't even cross his mind.

- Always one step above his brothers, Todomatsu has considered marriage in his life and finds the idea pleasing. He would want to do it properly, though, taking his time to get to know his partner before knowing that they'd want to settle down alongside him. He would help plan the wedding and enjoy both the ups and downs of the entire process, especially when his

partner becomes frazzled and stressed (though he never allows them to be overwhelmed).

Gentle

(How gentle are they, both physically and emotionally?)

- The only times that the eldest brother is considered gentle are when he sees that his partner is suffering physically or mentally. He will come alongside them and comfort them until they've calmed down enough to hold a conversation, wherein he'd ask about what happened and how he could help.

- Karamatsu is extremely gentle with everyone except his brothers (he's not a complete pushover). If you approached him with any issues, he would listen to everything that you have to say but wouldn't offer advice unless you had asked for it.

- He'd be more awkward than anything else, becoming stiff and unresponsive to anything he wasn't mentally prepared for. However, the longer he knows you, the more open he becomes toward your plights.

- Similar to Choromatsu, he would freeze in place when faced with a scenario he hasn't prepared for, but then he would try to find an excuse to leave and retreat. The more he warms up to you, the less skittish he becomes when you ask for kindness from him.

- As hyperactive as he is, Jyushimatsu is capable of reading the room accurately and will respond accordingly. Should you be in a position that requires a gentle touch or word, he will be the first to give it.

- With his social skills constantly being sharpened, Todomatsu is among the first to react correctly out of the sextuplets. He will ensure that your needs are taken care of before seeing if you desire vengeance (especially if it was one of his brothers that caused you pain).

Hugs

(Do they like hugs? How often do they do it? What are their hugs like?)

- All of his hugs start innocently, but there's always a point where his hands wander where they're not allowed and you have to 'gently' remind him that you're not okay with that (unless you are, then you reach for his buttocks). Osomatsu doesn't hug very often, so it's an unexpected treat when it happens.

- As polite as ever, Karamatsu won't touch you without permission, so he would always wait for you to ask or motion for a hug. His hugs are always warm and innocent, simply conveying his feelings for you with a gentle squeeze that never feels uncomfortable.

- When Choromatsu becomes more adjusted to being with you, he will first offer side hugs, expressing his worries at touching your chest. He'll bend to pressure if you keep insisting on frontal hugs, but it will always be stiff and robotic until a few months pass.

- Ichimatsu is completely against most physical gestures, freezing up completely the first time you hug him (taking a few hours to 'thaw' and retreat back home). The only touches that he seems okay with are head scratches and back rubs, which you are more than willing to give. It does surprise you when he sporadically gives them back.

- Jyushimatsu loves to receive hugs as much as he gives them out! Every hug is different depending on the circumstances that prompted it; gentle if you're sad, tight if you're happy, supportive if you're anxious.

- The youngest brother is always willing to give a hug when you make it clear, never making it awkward or erotic in any way. He doesn't do very well with receiving hugs without warning (doesn't want to mess up a good photo opportunity), but will gladly take them when you alert him of your intentions.

Infant

(How are they around children?)

- Despite his brash exterior, Osomatsu is quite gentle when it comes to being around children. He will roughhouse with them when appropriate, but understands that the younger ones need rest as much as play. Should he have kids of his own, he will do everything in his ability to ensure that they have the best care he can offer them.

- The second eldest brother is like a born caregiver, taking every precaution to ensure that he does nothing to hurt any child he comes in contact with. There are some times that he becomes flustered with what to do, but Karamatsu always steels himself and gets the deed done.

- Unfortunately, unless it's his own child, Choromatsu would not interact with kids around him. When faced with a crying child, he would try to find the parent nearby, but that's the extent he would go to. If he's asked 'why', his response is always "How can I have time for a kid when I'm busy trying to get a job?".

- Ichimatsu would become overwhelmed should he find himself around kids that he doesn't know, so much so that he would take an opportunity to crawl away to the closest dark corner. However, should he become a father, he would take care of the child more than the mother would (not for lack of trying on the mother's part, but rather because he constantly fawns over his kid). Ichimatsu would ask for his own mom's advice when something confuses him.

- Just like his older brothers, Jyushimatsu would be a little awkward around kids but those walls would soon fall down as he continues to watch them. With his childish antics, he would have no issues with playing alongside the children (it would make some of the parents uneasy until he made his innocent intentions clear). He's not completely sold on the idea of having kids of his own, despite fantasizing about it sometimes.

- Todomatsu is more focused on finding himself success, but he wouldn't ignore a kid in need. He's more likely to pass the child off to Karamatsu or Osomatsu if he's late to a mixer or date.

Jealousy

(How jealous do they get? What do they do when they're jealous?)

- Should the oldest brother find any other man trying to talk to you (for any reason whatsoever, even if it's for directions), he would immediately plant himself right behind you and slide his arms around your waist. On a scale of 1 to 10, Osomatsu is a firm 8 when it comes to his jealousy of you. He's more lenient towards his brothers because he knows you have handled them well in the past, but he's more twitchy when it comes to strangers. Should a woman hit on you, he would joke about it first (but if you've made it clear you're not into that, he'd back off and treat the women interacting with you just as hostile as the men). Osomatsu would keep his distance if you warn him ahead of any events, but he'd always stay within arms length of you.

- This man has absolute trust in you, always believing you at your word. He doesn't pursue any doubts he has, constantly and pleasantly surprised when you return to him after any time apart. Karamatsu will step in when he sees you struggle with someone, never taking over the conversation but always being the shoulder you need in the moment. When you do talk to him about your worries of someone trying to make a pass at you, he will ensure that he's always around when that person tries to approach you (regardless if it's at work or on the street).

- The third oldest doesn't seem to get very jealous over you, being more outspoken when he clearly sees you uncomfortable. Choromatsu will do what he can to ensure that you aren't seeking attention from anyone else, but he won't stalk you. Should you tell him of anything going on, he'll ask what your plan to deal with it is. What you don't see is more terrifying, though. Choromatsu will find the person he believes is taking your attention from him, stalk them thoroughly to where he has their routine memorized, and take matters into his own hands should he see them approach you.

- Similar to a cat, Ichimatsu has his own way of doing things. He will be his usual self around you in public, acting as a shadowy buffer to ward off anyone wanting to talk with you (even his brothers). However, should you confess to him that someone's trying to flirt with you and you're uncomfortable with it, he will immediately go on the offensive when you're not around. By your side, he's always within arms reach, but away from you, he's just as cruel as Choromatsu (who do you think the green-clad

brother learned it from?). Ichimatsu is probably the brother that gets jealous the most about you, regardless if it's a person or a hobby that's taking your attention from him, but he will never entertain the thought of killing someone for it.

- Just like Karamatsu, this man trusts you completely with everything you do. He did originally hover over you when you first got together, but he realized that you became more concerned about his well-being than your work and quickly backed off after watching you a few times from a distance. Your word is worth its weight in gold to him, but should he ever find you breaking it (on accident or on purpose), it will take quite a while to get back on his good graces. Jyushimatsu would go back to following you wherever you travel without your knowledge, ensuring that he was never seen, and question you where you'd been. Should you continue lying, he will become more overbearing and strict, almost mentally abusing and gaslighting you to bend to him. Should you tell the truth after the accidental lie, Jyushimatsu will back off again.

- Out of all the brothers, Todomatsu is the worst when it comes to jealousy. Never taking it to the physical level of Ichimatsu, he will ensure that his hold over your proverbial collar is tight by stalking your social media and tracking your phone. Should you be honest with him about what you're doing or where you're going, he will immediately back off and let you have your space, merely checking where you are to satisfy his curiosity and asking about how your day went when you returned home to him. However, if you lie to him, he will make it more and more obvious that he's digitally watching your movements. When you try to defend your lies, Todomatsu rebuffs anything you say with gaslighting and pointing the blame back on you, comparing you to his idiotic brothers before 'gifting' you a new phone (one that will only allow you to text or call him) as he 'accidentally' broke your personal one.

Kisses

(What are their kisses like? Where do they like to kiss you? Where do they like to be kissed?)

- Just like how fiery his temper can be, Osomatsu's kisses are feverish when alone with you. Ever since you started going out with each other, he has used every opportunity to explore your body with his lips, finding your sensitive spots easily. However, Osomatsu has not allowed you to do the same for him. The only sensitive spot you've uncovered is his left collarbone before he overpowered you and returned the favor. You have had the thought of asking him, but something always warns you that he'll respond better to a show of strength than a plea.

- You had to be the first one to kiss him, the poor man too shy to do any physical display of affection without asking several questions about your comfort level. When the deed was done, he became more aggressive in his kissing, adding tongue sometimes to keep you off-balance during your make-out sessions. He does play bite every so often, nipping at your shoulder blade and leaving a trail of hickies up to your neck. In public, he will only peck your cheek or lips. You've quickly learned that Karamatsu loves to take as much as he gives, adopting some of his kissing habits and learning to love the different sounds he makes.

- Just like Karamatsu, you're the one that needs to initiate affection with him...every time. He will kiss you back more and more intensely as he becomes comfortable with the sensation, but it'll take a little while for him to settle into it. Choromatsu hasn't found any sensitive spots yet, but you've discovered that he likes his feet and hands lavished on. He doesn't mind you being the one to lead, often encouraging it with small teasing gestures.

- His kisses are often short but passionate, the gloomy sextuplet is always quick to remind you just who you belong to whenever you're alone. His mannerisms become more cat-like as he kisses you, often nipping your lips and jawline before sucking hard on your neck. He calls it your 'cat bell', and you're often worried that it'll turn into an ugly bruise that you won't be able to hide. There are times when he allows you to have a time at 'dominating' him through kisses, but you haven't found a sensitive area that turns him into a kitten yet.

- As giddy as he is, Jyushimatsu prefers hugs over kisses with you. He doesn't refuse them whenever you offer, but he's never the one to initiate it (unless you ask). Despite this, you're satisfied with his attention.

- With the knowledge of the dating world as his weapon, Todomatsu understands the perfect balance of 'not enough' and 'too much'...often leaning on the 'too much' when you're breathless next to him and laughing while pleading for him to stop. He does, in his own time, but only after he's certain to nip your ring finger along the first knuckle. The youngest does let you explore when he feels like it (which isn't often), enjoying your little kisses here and there.

Lustful

(How would they react to a sexual relationship with you?)

- The oldest sextuplet is all bark and no bite when it comes to actually pursuing a sexual relationship with you. He talks constantly about wanting you physically, bragging about how large he is down there, and will try to bring you into intimate situations, but when you finally approve of what he does, the man becomes stunlocked. Osomatsu will follow whatever rules you put in place perfectly, but as both of you engage more, he will start taking the lead and surprising you with actions and positions you've never thought to try. Eventually, he becomes dominating in the relationship, slyly teasing you in public with intimate touches, ensuring that you know exactly how he feels in the moment.

- Ever courteous, Karamatsu would struggle to contain his excitement when you agree to become more than 'just friends'. He wants to follow your wishes, but he does tend to go a little too far for the first few times you meet up (not that you really mind). As he gains more sexual experience, he becomes more confident in his body and how it works, using it to his advantage to surprise you with positions you'd only dreamed of.

- He would ask you to repeat yourself over and over (which causes you some annoyance), not believing what you would be asking of him. Only when you threaten to retract your request would Choromatsu snap out of it and nod enthusiastically. At first, he would try to do what he's seen in pornos and dirty magazines, but when he realizes that it's more pleasurable to be spontaneous, Choromatsu would continuously surprise you with his sexual acts. It's become like a game for you two, you would guess what he had in store and he would reward you if you guessed correctly.

- As reclusive as the fourth brother is, Ichimatsu would immediately understand what you ask of him when inquiring about engaging in a sexual relationship (friends with benefits or otherwise). He wouldn't initiate anything with you, though, uncertain if he's comfortable with the idea. When you punch his 'v' card, Ichimatsu relaxes a little bit more in his behavior before exploring his more feral side with you.

- When the inquiry leaves your lips, Jyushimatsu is nearly on you in an instant, his excitement quite obvious in every way. He would back off should you insist on it, but he would make it clear that he'd take you up on the offer as soon as possible.

- Despite being shocked, Todomatsu would ask if you're certain of what you said, clarifying that while he would be okay with it should you wish to retract the statement. When you confirm your suggestion, he would bury his face in his phone in an attempt to hide the growing blush, stammering about how he's not sure how well he can please you in bed but willing to still try. After the first few times with you, Todomatsu would become a little more comfortable with you taking the lead, confessing that seeing you in charge gets him going more than he thought it would.

Mourn

(How would they react to news of your death?)

- Should you pass from natural causes, Osomatsu would spend as much time as he could with your body before it was disposed of. He would talk to you about endless stories of what he loved doing with you, the trouble that you'd both get into, what he liked doing for you. Only when your body was taken care of would he cry, holding himself up in his room for days on end until he had no more tears. Should you pass from manmade causes, Osomatsu would make every attempt to find you (if your body hasn't been found) and pour every ounce of energy he had into bringing the perpetrator to their knees. His gambling would fund the whole process, winning every bet every time, to ensure that your name was never forgotten in the world. Regardless of when he finds the person who killed you, he would nearly beat them to death with only his fists, dragging them unconscious to the

closest police station. It didn't matter to him if he was jailed alongside your killer.

- The second eldest would ensure that your family knew of what happened to you, stepping up to the plate and getting everything ready (if your will outlines it). When everything was said and done, Karamatsu would take some time to mourn in private, partially blaming himself for whatever had befallen you. If he were to find out about your death being man-made, his war path would be as vicious as Osomatsu's. He would recruit his brothers to help him find out what happened, only taking action when a suspect had been named through the police investigation. Karamatsu would have no qualms about being charged with first degree murder.

- He would be furious regardless of how you ended up dying, lashing out at the medical system for not helping you enough or the justice system for not acting fast enough to punish the guilty party. His anger would boil over towards his brothers, the other five doing their best to try and console him with his loss, but this act would only solidify how he can't count on anyone. Choromatsu would completely move out of his parents' home and into what used to be your abode, losing himself in the fantasy that you've never died.

- When Ichimatsu hears about how you died, there are only two outcomes: one for a natural death, and one for anything else. He will grieve your death the same in either case, but the actions afterwards are vastly different. Ichimatsu will cry for your passing, apologizing to the cats that you can't come feed them anymore, hiding himself in his hoodie more often, and rarely speak. When his grief has burned to anger, his attention will shift to how you died: anger flaring to rage if you were killed unnaturally, or anger chilling to emptiness if you died naturally. A natural death would see Ichimatsu becoming mute and severely depressed, only leaving the house to feed the cats. An unnatural death would see Ichimatsu dive deep into his dark thoughts, carefully gathering information as to where you were found, how you got there, and who was named as a suspect. It would take him a little while to get every detail, but once he had a correct name, place, time, and method, Ichimatsu would kidnap and maul the person in the same location. He would do everything to them that was done to you, leaving

them barely alive and very much alone. No one would know what Ichimatsu had done.

- It would be hard to find a smile on this man for a few months, the yellow-clad brother not bothering to do much of anything outside while your will was taken care of. He would be angry at the person who caused your death, but wouldn't do anything to harm them, persuaded by his brothers to let things lie. Ichimatsu would be his confidant, but the fourth brother wouldn't allow Jyushimatsu to act on any dangerous thoughts. Jyushimatsu doesn't ask why Ichimatsu left without warning for a few days.

- Verbal insults are this man's bread and butter, stringing together dreadful phrases and malicious images that he would shout from the rooftops (nearly getting the police called on him multiple times). After crying out his sorrow, Todomatsu would pester the mortician for updates about what was going on with your body. If you had died of natural causes, he would do everything in his power to respect your last wishes and work with Karamatsu to ensure that it all went to plan. Should Todomatsu find out that you died from something else, he would keep his fury quiet until he was certain that the justice system had done everything it could before taking any action himself. If the perpetrator was proclaimed 'innocent', he would gather as much research as he could on the person before leaving for 'a short trip'. Ichimatsu would go with him.

Nighttime

(How are nights spent with them?)

- Osomatsu would prefer a quiet end to his day, inviting you to join him for a drink. Once both you and he had your drinks of choice from a convenience store, you would follow his lead to the riverbank and just watch the stars. Sometimes, he would drink enough to relax completely, inviting you to scooch closer to him. The hug he would give never became anything more than friendly, his head resting against your shoulder like you were a pillow. You would always ensure that he got home safely.

- Should you be in a relationship with Karamatsu, he prefers to spend his nights with you instead of in his family's home. With a hot decaffeinated

drink in hand, he would hum endless lullabies to you until you drifted off to sleep.

- The nightly ritual that Choromatsu would have is dependent on his relationship with you. If you're partners, he'd stay with you at your place, both of you quietly reading books until a specified time. If you remain friends, Choromatsu would meet you at Chibita's stand for a late night meal and drink, catching up on everything that's been happening since you last saw each other.

- This brother would prefer the silence of your place over the rowdiness within his own home, curling up on your couch and laying his head on your lap while you brush his hair. The strands would never settle how you want, but you know that Ichimatsu enjoys the motion more than the outcome.

- Regardless of your friendly relationship to him, the fifth sextuplet will always find his way into your home and his arms around you in a tight hug on the couch while you're watching television. You've admonished him for the burglar-like behavior, but he's continued to do it while stating that his brothers are always active right before midnight. When the time passes, Jyushimatsu releases you and helps you into bed before leaving for his home.

- You always know when Todomatsu is getting ready for bed, as he will message you with some of his favorite pictures that he took that day along with a message inquiring you about how your plans went. Both of you would chat back and forth for a little bit until he stopped responding (usually because his brothers took his phone to watch some livestreamer). When you would wake up in the morning, there would always be a text from Todomatsu hoping that you have a restful sleep.

Open

(When would they start revealing things about themselves? Do they say everything all at once or wait a while to reveal things slowly?)

- This man would say everything about himself in such a manner that you're never quite sure if he's lying or telling the truth, his playful and teasing

nature making it that much harder to sort fact from fiction. However, as you get to know him on a more personal level, it's quite pleasant to find that Osomatsu had told you every social flaw he had within the first two hours of meeting him. He does hide some of his more 'darker' traits from you until it's necessary for you to know about them.

- The second eldest is a mirror-opposite of Osomatsu, flaunting every positive trait he has while desperately ignoring the deeper questions you have for him. He feels ashamed of how he behaves sometimes to get his brothers off of his back, of how their behavior is when all six are in public, of how he's the punching bag of the group. Karamatsu will reveal everything in time when you prove your trustworthiness, but that may take a few months.

- A professional at 'fake it until you make it', Choromatsu will lie to you over and over about what he does for a living...until you catch him at a Nyaa-chan concert in the middle of a work day (your day off). He would beg you to not tell anyone else, only opening up about his wishes to be employed and rise above the rest of his brothers when you promise to not speak about it.

- The toughest nut to crack out of the sextuplets, you'd need to get Ichimatsu to speak with you first. You do what you're able to get closer to him, but you realize that his behavior is quite in line with the stray and feral cats. When you don't speak to him for a few days, he's the first to ask why you're so quiet (which takes you by surprise). You are honest with him about your intentions, and he slowly begins to open up to you over the next few months.

- As wild as he can get, Jyushimatsu understands that being too upfront with someone can push them away. He withholds a lot about himself when you both start talking, only letting you know a little at a time out of fear of scaring you off. When he's more comfortable with your presence and understanding that you're not going to run away will he tell you most of everything else about himself.

- He doesn't see the need to tell you everything about himself, rarely divulging anything that doesn't benefit your relationship to him. There are

things that even his brothers don't know about it, so you know that there must be a lot more that he won't tell you. You're not even sure if you'll know everything about the youngest sextuplet by the end of ten years.

Patience

(How easily angered are they?)

- Osomatsu maintains his composure very well (but does let loose every once in a while to mess around with his brothers). It takes quite a bit of stress to make this man break all self-control.

- Despite his proud posturing, Karamatsu refuses to get angry at anything that doesn't involve his brothers' safety. He will take verbal and physical beatings without much fuss, but if someone threatens the life of a brother or someone he loves, Karamatsu will overpower them in an instant.

- While short about some topics, Choromatsu is tempered when it comes to anything in life. He does lash out verbally when plans go awry or when his brothers tease him, but that's due to the expected reaction they want. The third eldest allows a lot of things to pass by without emotional interaction.

- Seemingly, only Karamatsu can only bring out the ferocity of this dark brother, but this is only due to his violent outbursts being done out of sight. No one truly knows how far he'll go when he does snap.

- He will join in on his brothers' rampages sometimes, but his patience seems to have no end when it comes to people around him. Jyushimatsu will laugh off most threats, unnerving the one dealing the blows before the brother counterattacks with a smile on his face. No one has really seen him lose his temper in a fit of rage.

- Similar to Osomatsu and Choromatsu, the youngest brother plays along with the expected reaction to a scenario, but rarely lets his emotions control his actions. There are times when he becomes irate at Atsushi for flaunting his wealth, yet he doesn't take action against the businessman. Todomatsu will loudly voice his displeasure and plans of retaliation, but no one's sure if he's made good on those threats yet.

Quizzes

(How much would they remember about you? Do they remember every little detail you mention in passing, or do they kind of forget everything?)

- Despite his indifferent attitude, he remembers everything that you say. As idiotic as he can be, his mind is like a steel trap for information. He recalls every embarrassing moment since you've met him and never fails to bring them up, easing your stress with something you've done to help him while he was drunk (you're surprised that it's only his ambition that prevents him from getting a job).

- While his brothers tease him for being 'painful' and embarrassing in public, Karamatsu keeps close tabs on what the people around him prefer and remembers their dislikes easily. It does take him a few tries to nail down your favorites, but when he does, he never forgets.

- This brother has a bit of a harder time retaining information than his older brothers, struggling to remember your favorite color despite you wearing it constantly. However, you understand that he doesn't do this out of malice and gently remind him when he asks repeat questions.

- While remaining silent for the most part, Ichimatsu absorbs everything you say like a sponge. This also includes the passing comments that you forgot you made months ago.

- As impulsive as he is, Jyushimatsu does his best to bring a smile to your face with his limited knowledge of you. While there are instances where he gets some things wrong, he's quick to correct his mistakes (especially when they're related to any allergies you have). You overhear his brothers commenting about how many notes have cropped up in their house with facts about you.

- Even as socially-mature as he is, Todomatsu still gets a few things wrong about you. It takes him a while to dedicate something about you to memory, and you'll never admit to him how adorable he looks when he becomes flustered at a wrong answer (so much so that you've purposefully changed your favorite things a few times).

Remember

(What is their favorite moment in your relationship?)

- Despite how much he drinks, Osomatsu remembers everything when he's extremely intoxicated. He will never admit it outloud, but he loved seeing your worried face when you found him collapsed on the street. After he attempted to call your cellphone a few times, he was a little worried that he'd have to sleep off some booze before going home, so it brightened his day when you arrived. He loved how caring you were as you promised him safety, your physical strength when you carried him on your back, your tenderness when you helped him bathe at your place. He hasn't allowed himself to get that drunk ever since; Osomatsu doesn't want anyone else to see that side of you.

- The second eldest has a tough time having one favorite memory of you throughout the relationship, but he always finds himself coming back to two different instances. First was when you had kissed him unexpectedly, taking him by surprise after gathering the courage to do so. Karamatsu had immediately responded in kind and things quickly became heated in his home. The second memory is when he found you sick in a sudden rainstorm, both of you attempting to retreat to safety before he recognized you and brought you to your abode only a few blocks away. He adored taking care of you and watching over you while you slept (but not in a creepy way).

- Strangely enough, Choromatsu's fondest memory of your relationship is when you first gifted him a Nyaa-chan figure (complete with protective case). He treats it more like a trophy than his other figures, always ensuring that it's clean and properly placed in the sextuplets' bedroom. He did raise quite the fuss when Todomatsu had moved it for a better selfie angle, nearly exchanging blows until Karamatsu had returned the beloved figure to its place.

- The gloomy sextuplet keeps your gifted trinket in his hoodie pocket at all times: a small plush kitten with a purple handmade collar. It was a gift for celebrating your fifth friend-iversary. He adored everything that you did for him, eventually not calling himself 'trash' at your insistence. Ichimatsu

ensured that the plush was well taken care of, keeping it as pristine as the day you gave it to him.

- As weird as it is, Jyushimatsu's favorite memory in your relationship was when you punched him in the face. He had been going overboard with some of his antics (without realizing how obnoxious he was becoming) and had pulled on your hair a little too hard as he was trying to find your ticklish places. You had been warning him to stop, your tone growing more tense with each word before you whirled around and socked him square on the nose. Apologies flew from your mouth as soon as Jyushimatsu hit the floor, stunned by the action (but not the pain, he could handle that). He laughed off the injury despite the blood dripping from his nostril, both of you scrambling to clean him up, your apologies answering with his own.

- The youngest sextuplet's favorite moment of your relationship is quite simple: the moment you liked one of his Insta pictures. He had convinced you that you needed to be on social media after meeting up at a mixer, surprised that you had refrained from being on any social platform for so long. Todomatsu helped you create a profile for yourself, took the picture you used as a profile picture, answered most questions you had about how to work the app. He didn't encourage you to like any of his pictures, though, so when he received the notification that you had given one of his pictures a 'heart', he was pleasantly surprised.

Security

(How protective are they? How would they protect you? How would they react to being protected?)

- As the eldest brother, Osomatsu is familiar with protecting someone. However, he doesn't like people seeing that 'vulnerable' side of him, so he does a lot of his protecting behind your back. He'd escort you somewhere safe, excuse himself for a short moment, then go deal with the problem. Should the scenario be reversed, Osomatsu would hate to be protected. He'd definitely tease you for it before reminding you how strong he is.

- Karamatsu is just as fierce at protecting someone as Osomatsu is, but he has no issues with doing it in front of you. He has no qualms about using

his body as a physical shield between you and danger, even if you complain about it. He would stay with you until he was certain that the danger was over, apologizing for not stopping it sooner. Just like Osomatsu, Karamatsu frowns at the idea of being protected, but would do everything in his ability to make sure that you remain safe.

- The straight man of the sextuplets would rather leave everything to those that know how to deal with criminals, reporting the actions taken against you to the police. However, he wouldn't neglect you and leave you to suffer alone. Choromatsu would do his best to comfort you, tending to nearly every need you had until you could stand on your own again. He would also expect you to do the same for him.

- Ichimatsu would be aggressive, surprisingly. Not physically aggressive, but he would insult and berate the person trying to hurt you with such venom that you'd begin to worry for the aggressor. He'd do everything he could to ensure that nothing harms you, but would back off at your command if you thought he was going too far. Ichimatsu wouldn't reprimand you for trying to protect him, though he'd berate himself for relying on you keeping this 'piece of trash' safe.

- The constant ball of sunshine is quite scary when something threatens someone he loves, instantly dropping his sunny demeanor and rising to the challenge. He's not afraid to use his strength to protect you, but will bow to your demands if he thinks it's permissible. Jyushimatsu would care for you after the scenario has passed, praising you for being strong while he was dealing with the issue. If the roles were switched, he would still heap praises on you while promising to never have that happen again.

- Just like Ichimatsu, the youngest sextuplet fights with words. What he doesn't have in strength, he makes up for with verbal tenacity, having no qualms with insulting the aggressor and their whole family. His phone would be ready to record everything from the moment Todomatsu realized something was wrong, bringing you close to him. He'd continue his verbal assault until the police arrived or until you told him it was enough, always begging you to let him continue in a tone that would make you nearly cave. As for being protected, Totty wouldn't mind it as much as the other

brothers. He'd make sure that you were okay after it was all said and done, bragging at how well you did (even if you lost the altercation).

Treachery

(What would their reaction be when they find out about your cheating/affair partner?)

- At first, Osomatsu wouldn't bring it up at all, doing everything he can to avoid the topic. He will confront you should you realize that he knows more than he's letting on about your cheating, repeating your own words back to you from when you promised that you wouldn't see anyone. Some time after the shouting match that would inevitably happen, Osomatsu would calmly approach you and ask if you were unsatisfied with your relationship with him. If you were, he would give you the option to leave the relationship. If you weren't, he would ask more questions about why you're seeing someone else before asking if you preferred an open relationship with him. Should you want to see other people on the side while Osomatsu remained your main interest, he would allow it but he himself wouldn't look for other partners. You satisfy him completely.

- With his complete trust in you, he would slowly kill you with kindness, showing his love for you in every way possible just like he always had. The guilt would cause you to cave in and confess what you've been doing, Karamatsu listening to every word you say without interrupting. After you were finished, he would express his sorrow and disappointment for the decision you made while keeping his tone calm and steady (so you don't feel talked down to). When you were able to collect your thoughts, Karamatsu would ask if you would rather see someone else or if you wanted to remain with him alone. Should you want to stay with him, his attitude wouldn't change towards you, loving you just like before. If you wanted to see someone else, Karamatsu would stop having a relationship with you (saying that he wanted time to heal from the betrayal).

- As soon as he finds out, Choromatsu will confront you about it (even if you're with the other person). While his volume would be loud, you would recognize the curious tone it carries, his questions only focusing on what your thoughts would be if he came with you to the other person's house.

He'd confess that it was a fantasy of his to be a part of a threesome (and he doesn't care about the gender of the other person), nearly pressuring you into asking your affair partner right that moment. This whole interaction would take you completely by surprise, expecting to hear the standard tongue-lashing of a scorned partner. It would take a little bit for you to come to your conclusion, letting both your affair partner and Choromatsu know what your decision is. Choromatsu would want to remain in a relationship with you regardless of either outcome.

- The gloomy brother wouldn't approach you with the accusation, even if you see him while with the other person. You'd be the first one to mention it at all, uncertain of his answer. He'd state that who you decide to be with isn't up to him (after all, he's a shitty piece of garbage and knows that he deserves to be with no one). You would be given the freedom to decide how the relationship continues or ends, as Ichimatsu would refuse to say anything about it.

- The fifth sextuplet would be absolutely devastated at the knowledge of what you're doing, unsure if he needs to confront you about this or just let it slide. He does begin questioning how you feel about being in a relationship with him, never stating outright that he knows about your cheating. Should you show that you have no regrets about cheating on him, Jyushimatsu will pull away from you and quietly end the relationship without you realizing it until a few days have passed. If you do show remorse about your actions, he will still pull away but you would do everything to show him that he can trust you again.

- Todomatsu would demand an explanation for you cheating on him, nearly cornering you when you're home. He wouldn't restrain you at all, but the intense glare in his eyes is enough to keep you still. The youngest brother would hold nothing back, unloading all of his hurt, disappointment, and anger onto you without laying a finger on your body. After the anger would come sorrow, Todomatsu asking you over and over why he isn't enough for you, why you need to see someone else, why you don't feel safe asking him for what you do with your cheating partner, would he ever be enough for you. You may or may not have the answers at that time, but you know that if you try to console him physically (a hug or holding his hands) that he

would only see it as pity and verbally lash out again. Todomatsu would let a few days pass before he'd talk to you again, finding a time that works with your schedule so you can both discuss what the future looks like for both of you. He will not stay in a relationship with you should you ask for an open relationship, stating that he will not give his love to someone who would rather betray him than ask questions.

Unpleasant

(What would be some bad habits of theirs?)

- You would not be surprised by any bad habit of his, as he would tell you plainly what he enjoys doing: gambling, smoking, drinking, and watching pornography. You may not support any of his habits, but you understand that he has been like this since high school.

- There are times when his wardrobe becomes too much, the sequins and rhinestones lighting up the room whenever his closet door is opened, so much so that you have to wear sunglasses to even look at anything in the room. There's a chance that you've spoken to him about this, but it doesn't seem to really matter to him.

- Despite all of his bluster, Choromatsu has yet to step foot in an office for an interview. You see him reading self help books day after day, offering to assist him put together a resume, but he brushes off the motion of kindness. There are times when you think looking for a job is his job.

- It surprises you when you find Ichimatsu with Osomatsu, smoking alongside his oldest brother. Since you hadn't smelled cigarette smoke on his clothes, you never realized that he was a smoker. You're still not sure if you find that sexy or not.

- While Jyushimatsu has an impeccable bathing schedule, that level of cleanliness cannot be applied to his clothes. If anyone in the Matsuno household misses doing laundry for the day, his dirty clothes alone make the house smell like a gym locker room. You and Mrs. Matsuno are heavily considering teaching him how to do his own laundry.

- When it comes to his personal cell phone, Todomatsu becomes a leech and will latch onto any outlet close by while his phone recharges. He will not take his eyes off the screen nor interact with anyone until the battery reaches 100% capacity. Because Todomatsu uses his phone constantly, this could happen up to three times a day.

Vanity

(How concerned are they with their looks?)

- He could really care less about how he looks, not bothering to brush his hair until he's ready to go outside. Osomatsu prefers clothes that aren't a chore to put on or take off and consistently chooses his pull-on jeans and pullover to wear. He will dress up nicely when the occasion calls for it, but he won't stop complaining about how uncomfortable he is until he reaches his destination.

- This man never leaves the house without a pocket mirror and comb, checking and triple-checking his pockets for them every few steps. Karamatsu will give someone the mirror should they need to borrow it, always staying close by so he can get it back easily.

- He considers himself to be a proper human being, dressing in layers despite the weather outside. Never leaving the house until his clothes have been correctly settled on his body, Choromatsu doesn't consider himself as vain as Karamatsu, but he always wants to be interview-ready should the need arise.

- Ichimatsu is more concerned with comfort than appearance, neglecting his hair for as long as possible despite washing his body almost every day. His well-worn sweatshirts are a testament to this philosophy, rarely wearing anything that reveals his skin.

- As wild as Jyushimatsu can get, he prefers comfort over fashion and tends to choose clothing combinations that would raise eyebrows (socks with slippers, sweatshirt with shorts, etc.). Jyushimatsu will wear formal clothes when the need arises, but he'd much rather wear no clothes at all before wearing the suit and tie.

- When Todomatsu is on the search for a girlfriend, he dresses quite a bit nicer than his usual outfit, but has no issues with dressing down when it's time to relax. He's the first person that his brothers go to when they need fashion advice, doing everything they can to avoid Karamatsu's suggestions.

Whole

(Would they feel incomplete without you?)

- While he would lavish you with affection and kisses when you're together, he's quite self-sufficient when you're apart for any length of time. Osomatsu knows that if you missed him, you'd reach out through text or phone call.

- You're still not sure how he really acts when you're not together. His brothers complain about him singing poetry about you throughout the day, but his behavior is hard to pin down when you spend time with him.

- The third eldest brother has proven time and time again that he's capable on his own. While he does enjoy your company, Choromatsu doesn't let your absence distract him from his chores or goals.

- Ichimatsu will never say it out loud: he thinks about you all day. You're at the forefront in his mind when he's walking around the city, when he's with the alley cats, when he's relaxing at home. When his brothers tease him for being absent-minded in front of you, he lashes out (he can't hide the blush on his face and neck, though).

- His goodbyes are prolonged and his hellos are over-the-top, ensuring that you know how much this sunny boi thinks about you when you're apart.

- Following his oldest brother's example, this man is consistent with his public displays of affection and adoration when you're by his side, and would sometimes plan dates out when you're away. Todomatsu would take his brothers' teasing in stride, brushing aside most opposition about his 'non-NEET' ideas (you've loved his previous suggestions, so why would he stop now?).

(e)Xercise

(What is their fitness regiment? Do they workout at all?)

- As often as this man gets into physical scraps, he doesn't flaunt off his physique (unless you beg him to). He's not a gym rat like Karamatsu or Jyushimatsu, but he does have muscle.

- With the physical punishment that Karamatsu receives, it's no wonder that he's built like a Greek god. He loves showing off all of his hard work throughout the year, purposefully wearing tank tops and shorts that showcase his limbs while teasing onlookers with what could lay underneath. Karamatsu goes to the gym nearly every day of the week, often working out with Jyushimatsu.

- While he has all the time in the world, Choromatsu would rather spend it with his nose in a self help book or cheering on his favorite idol. His physique isn't sculpted like his older brothers', but he doesn't really have a gut either. You blame his good looks on genetics.

- The embodiment of lazy. Despite this, his body isn't holding as much fat as you would suspect, the baggy clothing acting as a camouflage for what his physique actually looks like. Should you be able to touch him without repercussions, you would feel that – while there is some fat on his body – his body has some muscle. Ichimatsu becomes embarrassed easily if you comment on it.

- You're not sure if Karamatsu and Jyushimatsu are in a silent competition to get ripped, for this man can lift. You've seen his physical feats in person before, and appreciate the restraint he puts into interacting with you.

- He's given you a hint of his physique when he wears his khaki capri shorts, the toned calves teasing at what else he could be hiding. When Todomatsu is confronted about how much he goes to the gym, he reaffirms that he only goes to keep his body fat low and not gain muscle. He prefers to have a fit and healthy body rather than a standard muscular one.

Yuck

(What are some things they wouldn't like, either in general or in a partner?)

- While he is enthralled with some genres in the pornographic culture, he will always shy away from incestuous media. Osomatsu finds incestuous BL/GL (boy love/girl love with full or step siblings) to be disgusting, so much so that he physically cringes away from Ichimatsu when he confesses his brotherly love playfully while dressed as Karamatsu.

- Karamatsu finds confidence in his partner to be aspiring, but will second-guess his choice should they prove to be overly clingy or demanding. His previous marriage to Dobusu has shown him that he can't tolerate someone who makes demands of him constantly while threatening punishment if he refuses.

- The third eldest is quite selfish in his relationships, often lashing out or berating those who are more successful than he is at anything (even his brothers or parents). He doesn't like being reminded of his shortcomings.

- As a cat person through and through, he doesn't like dogs. Despite Jyushimatsu dressing up as one sometimes, Ichimatsu will walk him as a brotherly favor.

- He understands that, when left alone for an extended period, his thoughts can physically change the world around him. It's why Jyushimatsu loves to be around other people, even if they're strangers.

- Never be around Todomatsu during a violent storm or a blackout. This man can become unhinged nearly instantly should his phone stop working for any reason, trying everything to see if he can create some kind of battery that can charge his phone. Tossing him hard crossword puzzles or word searches seems to stall this behavior (anything that challenges him since answers can't be looked up online).

Zero

(How would they react to your confession when they feel nothing towards you?)

- He would meet you wherever you indicated, more than likely smoking a cigarette if the area allowed it. Osomatsu would hear you out, but would

instantly shut you up should the words 'like' or 'love' be mentioned along with his name, stating that you weren't his type. He wouldn't brush you off with disgust, instead making it extremely clear that you don't get his blood pumping in that manner. Should you be friends with him before the botched confession, he would still keep the friendship...but it'd be hard to deny that things are now awkward between you two.

- Karamatsu would listen to everything you have to say, never interrupting your train of thought. When you were finished, he would apologize before stating that there was nothing between the two of you. If you had given anything to him, he would return it in the same condition it was given in. Karamatsu would offer to escort you home before leaving you alone.

- The green-clad sextuplet would freeze in his steps, becoming absolutely still while you continued to confess your feelings for him. You would notice the difference in behavior, asking if he was okay but he'd only respond with laughter. Laughter that started softly before becoming nearly maniacal. He'd ask if you were pulling a prank on him, brushing aside your confession as a joke without apology. When Choromatsu would realize you were serious, he'd barely apologize and state that you were wasting his time with Nyaa-chan.

- The reclusive sextuplet wouldn't even show up for the confession. He'd avoid you at all costs, going to any length to not see you which included sending his brothers to tell you to back off. Any friendship you had with him would be gone.

- At your confession, he'd be near a state of surprise. Depending on how close you were as friends, Jyushimatsu would either apologize profusely with statements that he just didn't feel the same way about you, or he'd gently decline your attempt.

- He didn't earn the 'dry monster' nickname from his brothers for nothing. Totty would initially listen to your confession before pulling out his phone, blatantly ignoring you, refusing to look at you even if you trailed off or called him out on his behavior. Only when you had quieted down for a while would he look back to you, scoffing at your tears while asking if you were finished. Regardless of your reaction to this, Todomatsu would state

that he was late to a mixer and leave without acknowledging anything you said.

Osomatsu and Deaf!Reader

Inspired by ara_jhoo's prompt.

Normally, tonight would be for heading to the public baths with his five younger brothers, but since they had all moved out of their parent's home and had jobs, it was harder for all six Matsuno sons to find time to spend just thirty minutes together. Osomatsu finished off the milk he had bought and tossed the bottle into the trash receptacle before stepping out into the cool night air, the slight breeze gently ruffling his hair.

There wasn't any rush to go back to his rented apartment since no one was waiting for him there, so he wanted to swing by his parent's house just to see how they were doing.

Opening the door with his usual greeting, he noticed two other pairs of shoes by the entryway.

"Oy, Karamatsu and Todomatsu!" He called out as he took off his own shoes, seeing the common room door slide open to reveal the youngest brother glaring at him with a twitch in his eye.

"I thought you had work, you damn shitty eldest."

"Someone wanted more hours, so I let them take my shift," He grinned as he set the bath essentials down near the lip of the entryway, "No skin off my nose."

"

Brother!

" The youngest was shoved down to the ground as the second oldest revealed himself with the trademark English term, the usual sunglasses pushed up on his head to act like a headband, "It's been such a long time since we've seen each other! Come, let's talk and drink to days gone bye."

"Yeah, yeah..." Osomatsu rolled his eyes and groaned, stepping into the common room to see that there were the remains of a fruit platter sitting on the table. He sat down at the table and started picking at the pear slices, taking the cold canned beer that Todomatsu offered, "How about your jobs?"

"It's office work. What else can be said about it?" Totty sighed, taking a long sip from his own beer.

"Mine's not too terrible. Still doing temp work since no one wants to hire me, it seems," Karamatsu took his place at the table, stealing one of the pear slices from Osomatsu's reach. The oldest retaliated by swiping one of the slices that Karamatsu was reaching for.

"Sucks to hear that, but maybe one will hire you permanently soon."

Osomatsu stayed a few more hours chatting with his brothers before being pushed out so their parents could go to bed, laughing as his mother physically shoved them out of the house. Bidding farewell to Karamatsu and Todomatsu, he sauntered back to the apartment building, his belongings safely tucked underneath his left arm. The unexpected sight of the two definitely lifted his spirits after the rough work week at the bookstore.

Climbing the last stair, he caught sight of a huddled figure sitting outside his neighbor's apartment door. Slightly raising an eyebrow, he remembered that they had been there when he left earlier.

Was the neighbor not home?

Osomatsu had only seen her a few times; introducing himself when she had moved in, helping her carry a large load of groceries up the stairs, and returning laundry that had escaped her drying line onto his balcony. The only thing that he was bothered by was that she never spoke a word of thanks, shrugging off the thought before opening his own door and setting everything he carried back into its place.

His eyebrows lowered into a partial glare as his inner voice told him to do something about the person, staring at himself in the mirror before turning

on his heel and heading back out the door. The person was still there, arms folded over their knees with their hands tucked in from the cold. Their head rested on the not-so-soft pillow of their forearms, and their lugs were tucked in close to their body.

He stopped in front of them, resting a hand on his hip, "You shouldn't sleep out here."

There wasn't an answer from them.

Maybe he's actually asleep?

Osomatsu squatted down and listened carefully, hearing their breathing slow and shallow.

"Hey," He tapped their arm gently, frowning when he didn't get a response. Osomatsu reached out and shook their left shoulder, calling out louder.

In a swift movement, the person woke up and shoved something close to his eyes, a thick liquid spraying from their extended hand.

"What the hell?!" Osomatsu screamed out in shock and pain, his hands flying up to his eyes to rub off whatever was coating them. The sting grew worse as his eyes teared up from the pain, making him stumble and roll onto his back in agony. He couldn't see anything past the inky blur of night, but he felt two hands grab at his shirt and pull him in a direction, blindly clambering them before he realized that the person may be trying to kill him.

"Get off!" Osomatsu twisted around, feeling the hands let go of his shirt before pushing him forward instead of dragging him. He reeled from the touch again, rubbing at his eyes more furiously to get rid of the paste.

Fucking mace...!

He stumbled over a step, fearing that he was going to fall down the staircase and quickly backed up into someone. They pushed at him again and he took a few steps forward before he heard a door close somewhere behind him.

My neighbor!

"Help me...!" His hands burned as he grabbed his shirt to rub off the mace from his eyes. A small grunt sounded behind him as the hands pulled at his right arm, leading him somewhere.

If he wasn't at the staircase, then where was he?

Another urgent noise, sounding more female this time, came from in front of him before he felt his upper half be pushed over the lip of something. As he fought against the lip, feeling something smooth and cool underneath his stinging hands, he stilled as cold splashed onto his face.

Caught off-guard, he sputtered and spat out the new liquid that had made its way into his mouth, fearing that he had been sprayed again for complete submission. Another cold splash before the same female voice grunted, the words garbled in his ears.

The new liquid didn't burn at all. In fact, it brought relief to the burning and calmed Osomatsu down from his adrenaline-fueled fight-or-flight mode. He recognized the smell of it through the heavy pepper scent.

Milk.

He cupped his hands and held them out in front of him, motioning for milk to be poured onto his hands. The person helping him obliged, pouring some milk into his cupped hands before he started to wash his hands in the liquid, rubbing off the pepper spray before even thinking of touching his face. Switching between his face and hands, the person stopped giving him milk for a moment, leaving him partially blinded as his front door closed again.

Kneeling in the stillness, he could see that he wasn't outside the apartment at all.

He was in his own bathroom in fact, positioned over the tub with milk dripping off his face and hands. Without blinking, he partially turned to glance over the side of the tub, seeing a large empty milk bottle resting on

the bathmat. The bath itself was a mix of red and white liquids, the pepper spray clinging to the sides of the tub.

"I'm gonna beat the crap outta him..." He growled as he heard his door open and close once more, someone entering the bathroom and kneeling next to him. A feminine hand reached from his peripheral vision with a wooden ladle full of milk, giving him almost no time to react before it was thrown against his face.

He spat out what fell into his mouth, "He didn't get you, did he?"

A heavy pause stretched into a long silence, the woman ladeling more milk onto his hands.

Maybe she didn't want to talk about what happened?

"He...didn't hurt you in any way, did he?" Osomatsu glanced over after she splashed his face once more. She flinched back and set the small milk bottle and ladle down on the ground, backing up and pressing her forehead to the floor. Her voice was still garbled to his ears, making him wonder if his hearing was damaged.

When she lifted her head, he saw tears in her colored eyes as a saddened look pressed down her features.

"Tell me what he did," Osomatsu quickly wiped off his hands with the nearby bath towel, dabbing the rough cloth on his face before looking back at her, "Tell me, and I'll pay him back tenfold!"

A look of realization passed across her face before she sat up straight, straightening out her right hand and tapping her chest with four fingers, moving her hand towards her right shoulder and tapping herself again. A worried look passed over her face when Osomatsu just stared at her, repeating the motion again before looking frazzled. She clambered to her feet and raced out the bathroom, her footfalls echoing through the apartment before she returned with a cellphone in hand.

Her fingers flew over the screen before a robotic male voice called out, "Are you okay?"

His eyes widened in realization.

She was

deaf

! She wouldn't say anything in response to him because she never heard him in the first place!

"I'm all right, but what about you? Did the man out there hurt you?" Osomatsu spoke slowly, watching as she looked down at her phone after he finished speaking. Her hair hung loose in a bun, some strands falling in front of her face before she started typing on her phone again.

"There was no stranger, only me. I maced you by accident, thinking that you were going to hurt me," The phone spoke the words she typed out, her eyes watching Osomatsu for his reaction, "I'm so sorry."

He paused for a moment before laughing into the towel he used to wipe off his hands, looking over to her when he caught his breath. Osomatsu could see that she was ready to catch whatever he wanted to say.

"I just wanted to help you out, if you were a stranger. Why were you outside your apartment?" Osomatsu reached over to turn on the bath water, washing off the milk and spray that remained. He could hear her typing a response.

"I locked myself out accidentally and the landlord wasn't responding to my text messages."

He held off speaking for a moment, waiting for her to get ready to 'hear' him.

"Would you like me to call him for you?"

The response came a few moments later, "That would be wonderful."

With a nod, Osomatsu stood up and tossed the towel onto the small washing machine before heading out of the bathroom, picking up his cell phone and dialing the landlord's number. When the line clicked over to a voicemail, he left the message that his neighbor was locked out of her apartment and would need assistance in the morning.

He looked over his shoulder to see her look at him expectantly, her phone in front of her.

"No good. He didn't answer, but I left a voicemail for him," He gave a slow shake of his head.

"Darn," The phone spoke up, "I don't have my wallet or anything with me that would allow me to stay at a hotel."

Osomatsu put a hand up to his chin, looking around his apartment like it held the answers to the universe. The glass sliding door leading to the small porch caught his attention, waving his hand to get his neighbor's attention. She glanced towards him before holding out the phone.

"Did you leave your back door unlocked?"

A look of thoughtfulness crossed her face before she lightly shrugged with a small head shake in uncertainty.

Well, that could be the quickest way in

, Osomatsu thought as he made his way towards his porch, eyeing the distance between the two balconies. He'd be able to jump it with no issue.

"I'm going to see if it's unlocked. Do I have your permission...umm...?" His voice trailed off, trying to find a way to ask for her name.

"(Y/n)," The answer came quickly, "Don't hurt yourself."

"(Y/n)..." Osomatsu repeated to himself, a smile growing on his face. The door slid open easily and he climbed on top of the railing, keeping his footing steady as he lay his hand against the side of the wood paneling on the building exterior. Sucking in a small breath, his legs crouched into a

jumping position before leaping over to (y/n)'s balcony. The movement drew a strangled cry from (y/n) as she watched him land on the opposing railing, turning to give her a wide smile before slipping and falling onto the unforgiving wood planks of her balcony.

He jumped back onto his feet and held out a thumbs up to signal that he was fine, seeing a relieved look on her face before turning towards the sliding door and gently tugging on the handle to feel the door give.

Slipping inside (y/n)'s apartment, Osomatsu realized that her apartment was the same layout as his, closing the door behind him as he made his way towards the entryway. Her apartment smelled of apples and lavender, and he glanced towards where her bedroom was to see that the door was partially open. His mind wondered at what she had in there, but his gut yelled at him that she was probably waiting by her door.

Clearing his thoughts, he took long strides towards the front door, unlocking the door and opening it to see (y/n) waiting expectantly. Too excited to use her phone, her voice struggled to form the right words as she gave Osomatsu a tight hug.

"No worries," He spoke slowly, exaggerating the words on his lips on the off chance that she would understand what he was saying. Catching a whiff of the pepper spray still lingering on his face, Osomatsu held back a cough and excused himself for a quick shower as (y/n) allowed him to leave, waving good-bye.

Coming back from his routine morning jog the next day, Osomatsu found a package sitting in front of his door with a note taped to the top. Picking up the package and note, he saw the note was signed by (y/n).

'Neighbor Osomatsu,

I wanted to thank you so much for helping me out last night, and also apologize for spraying you in self-defense. Contained in the box is a freshly made batch of apple-cinnamon cookies (hopefully the smell doesn't deter you from eating them), and I'd like for you to have my phone number just in case I need emergency assistance with something.

Regards, Neighbor (Y/n)'

Osomatsu smiled as he set the box down on his kitchen counter, opening up the top to see the apple-cinnamon cookies sealed in a bag. Taking one out, he bit into it and had to stop himself from devouring them all as the spices settled nicely on his tongue while the baked apple chunks were just the right consistency for him.

Finishing off the one cookie, he put her number into his phone and sent her a confirmation text stating who he was.

Osomatsu smiled to himself as he put the cookies away, hoping that she'd lock herself out by accident more often...and not holding mace.

MatsuNoir!Osomatsu x Reader, Part 1

Inspired by shimmering_clouds' prompt.

Roles I'm working with:

Osomatsu

- the oldest of the sextuplets raised by the boss of a manly organization that controls the underworld in a far-away country. When they were younger, they were saved by the boss after being kidnapped. He goes by the alias Hong Cung.

Karamatsu

- the second-oldest of the sextuplets raised by the boss of a manly organization that controls the underworld in a far-away country. He has a tattoo wrapped around his body in the shape of a dragon. He goes by the alias Laam Cung.

Todomatsu

- the youngest of the sextuplets raised by the boss of a manly organization that controls the underworld in a far-away country. He has a tattoo similar to Karamatsu's, only varying in colour. He goes by the alias Tou Cung.

"Are you serious?" His youngest brother spat as he grabbed a handful of his jacket collar and dragged him closer, nearly pressing their faces together while the oldest resisted the forced movement, "You know that park is off-limits for us!"

"It's what my girl wants, Todomatsu," He returned the glare that the youngest was giving him, "I'm not going to blow our cover, okay?"

"Your dick is going to get you into trouble, Osomatsu. Just tell her that you can't go and hook up with one of your other call girls for the day," Todomatsu shoved him back, gritting his teeth.

"No way," Osomatsu straightened out his jacket, gladly taking a step back and glancing towards the office door, "I can't put a finger on what it is, but my girl makes me feel different than the others do."

"Oh my God..." Todomatsu rubbed his face with his hands, "So you've got a new kink, who cares? You

can't

go to Kowloon Park. It's crawling with cops and eyes for gangs while, may I remind you, we just took out one of the larger gang leaders

last night

! We need to stay low right now!"

Osomatsu shifted his gaze back towards Todomatsu, watching him move to the large desk sitting near a pair of shuttered windows and fall back into the chair, leaning heavily against one of the armrests while his hands covered his face. Taking in a deep breath and letting it all out in an angered growl, Osomatsu tucked his hands into his jacket pockets.

"What precautions would you want me to take? What can I do to go?"

"You can sit the fuck down and

LISTEN TO ME!

" Todomatsu yelled out, his voice laced with frustration as his hands clenched into fists, slamming down on top of the desk while his dark eyes swirled with anger, "Why can't you

fucking

understand what I'm telling you?!"

"Everything okay?" A new voice entered from the doorway, drawing the two brothers attention to another face like theirs. The partially buttoned-up black shirt did little to hide the blue dragon tattoo wrapped around his body, the man sporting a few bandages taped to his face and neck.

"Not at all, Karamatsu," Todomatsu sighed as he stood up from the chair, "Can you please talk some sense into our idiot older brother? He wants to go to Kowloon Park for a 'date' with one of his call girls."

"(Y/n) isn't a call girl," Osomatsu shot an angry glare at Todomatsu who only returned the look with the same fire.

"Wait, you want to do that right

now

? Osomatsu...what's gotten into you lately? You've never been this adamant about going somewhere public after a hit," Karamatsu took a few steps into the office, closing the door behind him as he looked towards Osomatsu with a pleading look in his eyes.

"Ugh...it's just one date for a few hours," The eldest rolled his eyes in frustration at being met with resistance on every turn, "We've had this planned for almost two weeks. I've tried to change her mind about where it could be, offering the clubs and restaurants that we run, but she wouldn't budge on the destination. She

really

wants to go to Kowloon Park."

"Then toss her to the side," Todomatsu groaned, "She sounds like the kind of woman that would do anything to get her way and those broads are the worst to be in love with."

"Is this the same '(y/n)' you've been talking about recently?" Karamatsu raised an eyebrow, moving towards one of the few high-back chairs in the office and sitting down while maintaining eye contact with Osomatsu.

"Yeah."

"I already know that you're going to ignore my advice, but I just want you to hear me out," The second-eldest gave a small sigh while rubbing his uninjured forehead with his index and middle fingers, "Stay home tomorrow. Reschedule the date if need be, but

please

don't go outside. There are too many hiding spots at Kowloon and I know you're going to self-destruct if something happens to (y/n) while you're there."

Osomatsu took a sharp inhale.

It wasn't a threat that Karamatsu was promising -- it was an inevitability. He knew that going on this date was a big risk, but the thought never crossed his mind about how it could put (y/n) in the line of fire as well.

But he was just as stubborn as her, if not more.

"All right. I've heard your piece," He turned to Todomatsu, seeing the youngest walk around the desk and head towards the door, "Can I go now?"

"You're impossible."

Todomatsu opened the office door wide and left, leaving the two older brothers alone until Osomatsu took his hands out of his pockets, striding out of the office and turning towards his private bedroom. Gritting his teeth and his lips turning down into a sour frown, Osomatsu's head filled with ideas of how to ensure that the date went well

and

keep (y/n) safe.

Slamming the bedroom door shut behind him, he flipped on the lights and fell onto his large Western-style bed, letting an arm drape over his eyes as he took in deep breaths.

Kowloon Park was big, just over thirty-three acres of public property that was open year-round, and (y/n) had mentioned that she wanted to see the Chinese Garden and the Bird Lake. Both were possible for ordinary citizens, but as a gang member -- especially as one of the upper echelon -- Osomatsu wasn't going to enjoy himself at all.

His free hand moved towards the notepad laying on his bedside table, looking underneath his other arm to see a list of names with phone numbers and times available next to them.

(Y/n) was on the bottom of the list, with only her phone number written down.

Osomatsu had everything he longed for in life: money, power, women...He could snap his finger and five of his call girls would be available in the next few minutes. He owned a collection of hot rod cars, drove them on the highways to show them off and paid top dollar for the cars to be kept in prime condition. If someone bumped his shoulder and didn't offer their apologies immediately, he could have them taken care of in moments.

So why the fuck was

(y/n)

driving him insane?!

Osomatsu removed the arm from his head, staring up at the ceiling as a single thought wormed its way through his brain.

It was because she was

normal

.

(Y/n) knew that he was rich, that he was a part of some large organization, but she didn't care about it. She didn't call him to cover a bill or to have some 'one-on-one' time with him.

She treated him like a normal person...and

he liked it

.

A wet heat began to settle in his loins, distracting him for a moment as the jeans grew tighter around his waist. Ditching the notepad and flinging off his red jacket, he laughed a little to himself as he unbuckled his pants.

Maybe he did have a new kink...

The wind softly tugged at her hair and played with the hem of her dress as she crossed the footbridge into the park, using the structure to easily cross over the busy road underneath. It was supposed to be a warm day with a slight breeze, leaving a small chance of rain later on in the evening, and she had dressed for the occasion.

A black tank top rested underneath the spaghetti-strap loose red dress, with her feet partially covered by gladiator-style sandals. The sunlight warmed her colored hair as she pulled it away from her face, twisting it into a spiral that didn't hold together. Taking out the cell phone from her little purse, she reconfirmed the spot where he had wanted to meet her and cut through the small restroom plateau on her right towards her destination. (Y/n) smiled as she heard the birds in the park aviary, catching a small glimpse of the Bird Lake through the thick trees that bordered the crafted lake.

Taking a seat outside the Heritage Discovery Center, she could only wait patiently as the time neared when she and Osomatsu were supposed to meet up. He hadn't given her any word of warning that he'd be late, but she wouldn't be surprised if he texted her a few minutes after.

He was busy with his company, after all.

The clock nearby ticked on, a soft sound announcing the new hour as she spotted Osomatsu amongst the crowd walking towards the building,

standing up to intercept him.

"You were almost late," She fell into step next to him, slipping an arm through the one planted in his jacket pocket. Osomatsu quickly glanced over to her and gave her an apologetic smile.

"Yeah, I guess so," A wider smirk washed over his face, his eyes losing the tension from before, "Are you ready?"

"Of course," (Y/n) nodded, returning his look with her own smile, "What did you have in mind?"

"Not much. I only have a small surprise planned for you since you wanted to keep this date simple," He leaned over and briefly rested his cheek against hers, the negligible height difference not mattering to him. She laughed quietly and playfully pushed him away, the blush not unnoticed by Osomatsu.

"Well, I hope it's a good surprise."

The couple headed towards the main pathway of Kowloon Park, walking at a relaxed pace as the sounds of Bird Lake grew closer. The bordering trees parted and revealed the lake in its splendor, their eyes first catching the flock of flamingos that gathered near the shores. The secure logs scattered around the lake held turtles and non-aquatic birds.

(Y/n) took several pictures with her phone, smiling up at Osomatsu as he held out his hand and offered to take some pictures with her in them. She made the same offer for him, but a quick look of tension traveled across his face as he declined, turning away to look at the birds again and leaning against the metal railing of the pathway.

"Osomatsu...?" The smile slowly vanished from (y/n)'s face, her hand gently reaching out and touching his shoulder, "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to upset you."

"No..." His throat clenched before a light smirk crossed his lips to mask the uncertainty, "No, it wasn't that. I'm just not very photogenic and I'd ruin

your camera if you took a picture of me."

"Oh, I doubt that," She huffed lightly, "It's not like you're some kind of Gorgon that's gonna destroy the camera. Just one picture, if you want. I'd really like to commemorate this date with it."

Osomatsu ran a hand through his slightly gelled hair, standing up straight and turning back towards her, a smile on his face once more.

"What kind of picture did you want of me?"

"Ah, I don't know? I was just thinking about a normal one? You don't have to pose," (Y/n) blinked a few times as she thought the question through.

Osomatsu inwardly smiled at her words, propping up both elbows on the railing and giving a genuine smile as she held up her phone, a digital 'click' sounding out before she stumbled forward. Osomatsu was quick to steady her, taking her upper arms in his hands and leveling a glare towards the person who had bumped into her, seeing them overloaded with large bags.

"Oh, I'm so sorry!" (Y/n) turned towards the person, giving an apologetic bow and holding it until the other acknowledged the gesture with a small hand wave and a nervous look. They walked away without responding, leaving (y/n) to slowly stand back up with a saddened look on her face.

"Hey, don't worry about them," Osomatsu relaxed his look, holding out a hand for her to take, "Probably a foreigner by the way they were acting. Wanna head to the aviary next? We can take another picture there."

"Yeah..." (Y/n) took his hand, interlocking her fingers with his and looking up at him, "Yeah, that sounds good."

The aviary was less crowded than Bird Lake, the foot traffic not as restricted as it was on the footbridge over the lake.

(Y/n) had been able to take another picture of Osomatsu without interruption and even more pictures of the birds in the aviary. Osomatsu

stayed close behind her, his head on a near constant swivel when he wasn't paying attention to her.

"What are you worried about?"

The question caught him off-guard as she held out a smoothie for him to take, sitting next to him on a bench just in front of the Maze Garden. His attention snapped back to her, taking the offered smoothie and moving a little closer to her side.

"I'm not worried about any

thing

, per se--" He slipped the straw into his mouth before answering further. Osomatsu mentally swore at himself, realizing how obvious he'd been with his tension about something happening by how easily (y/n) had picked it up.

"Then why do you keep looking over your shoulder?"

"Because--"

"Is it because of this,

Mr. Cung

?" (Y/n)'s voice grew quiet.

Osomatsu nearly spat out the smoothie in his mouth, surprised to hear his alias' last name uttered from her lips. She didn't say anything more, only tilting her phone screen towards him to reveal a tabloid article written about the 'Playboys of Hong Kong', a black and white photo plastered behind the thick outlined characters revealing him and Karamatsu leaving an apartment building. His heart jumped into his throat as he realized the location from a hit a few weeks ago.

(Y/n) closed the tab on her phone and shut off her screen, leaning against his shoulder.

"(Y/n), I--" Osomatsu couldn't find his voice, swallowing the melting juices of the smoothie to try and get rid of the tightness in his throat.

"You don't need to try and justify anything, Osomatsu," She didn't look up at him, "I've...known for a while who you were."

"Listen...I'm not going to deny it. That was me," After taking a deep breath, Osomatsu turned on the bench towards (y/n), catching her chin with a finger and gently lifting her head up to look at him, "But I'm

not

using you, if that's your fear. It's never crossed my mind to betray you like that."

"I just want to know...is what I'm seeing right now some persona of yours? Something to hide behind so you're not suspicious while in public?" (Y/n)'s eyes held a torrent of emotions, the hue shifting slightly in the sunlight.

Osomatsu swallowed the saliva in his mouth, glancing around to see that they were alone before looking directly into her eyes with his own dark shade and swiftly closing the distance between their lips.

Her lips were soft against his, partially opening in surprise as he held the kiss, resisting the growing urge to devour her in his passion. Osomatsu's free hand gently caressed the side of her face before shifting to the back, slightly pressing in to keep their lips together.

Pulling away, he almost laughed at the flabbergasted look on her face, a blush spreading across her cheeks as he felt his own face heat up.

"This isn't some kind of façade," He nearly whispered, his hand still on her head, "I love being with you, (y/n)."

He mentally tripped over his own words, the term

'love'

stumbling forward without hesitation. Is that what he really felt about her? Was the new feeling that he had considered

'love'

?

(Y/n) opened and closed her mouth a few times, trying to speak but not finding the right words to say as her free hand lightly traced a few fingers against her lips. The blush somehow deepened and she looked back at Osomatsu.

He braced for the public tongue thrashing he was about to get.

"Do that again."

"What?" Confusion washed over his face.

"I...I want you to do that...again..." The confidence from the first demand faltered and completely faded by the time she got the last word out. Osomatsu could only stare at her before stifling a laugh, covering his mouth as he turned away to try and hide his amusement.

"Wh-why did you want me to kiss you again?" Her reaction clicked in his head, making Osomatsu look back at her with slight surprise, "Don't tell me that was your

first

kiss--"

Her face was completely red as it barely dipped down in a small nod.

His body froze and his mind went blank.

Shit.

"Ah...geez, I'm sorry. I should've asked if it was okay," Osomatsu pulled his hand from his mouth, rubbing his left shoulder in uncertainty.

"No...I mean, I didn't know you were...going to do

that

," (Y/n) shook her head. His eyelids lowered in recognition, leaning down to her ear.

"Did you

really

want me to do it again?" Osomatsu lowered his voice into a near growl, seeing her flinch as the blush started to spread down her neck and around her ears.

"I...want you to be honest, Osomatsu," (Y/n) fought past the blush and turned to fully face him, setting her smoothie cup down on her knee. Osomatsu gave a small smile in return, amused that she focused back on the original subject and adjusted his own body language to nearly mirror her own.

"(Y/n), I love you," He kept himself from smiling at her flustered reaction to his words, "I'm not a clean person, but that doesn't matter to you. I can only guess that you've done some looking into that article and, while that does worry me because I don't want you to involve yourself in that part of my life, it doesn't detract from my feelings towards you. Your personal history doesn't bother me because I know mine's probably worse and, if you're accepting of me when you already know a bit about it, then I fully accept you without knowing anything of yours."

"How many girls do you tell this to, 'Playboy of Hong Kong'?" (Y/n) had a sly smirk on her lips, the blush still prevalent on her face.

"Only you," Osomatsu returned the smirk, cupping his hand against her warm left cheek, "And I'll tell it to you as many times as you want to hear it."

He pulled her close and kissed her deeply on the lips again, his heart fluttering in his chest as he felt her lips move against his, fully reciprocating the kiss.

--Mature-- MatsuNoir!Osomatsu x Reader, Part 2

Inspired by shimmering_clouds's prompt.

(Continuation of their first request, MatsuNoir!Osomatsu x Reader)

WARNING! This is a mature chapter, and meant for an 18+ audience. If you're younger than that, I respectfully ask that you find something else to read.

If you're older than 18, you may continue at your own discretion.

This story contains sexual scenes (male to female).

His finger tapped against the bedside table as he stared at the notepad in his other hand. With the new year coming up in a few days, he wanted to make sure that everything went perfectly.

Was 8 a.m. too early for (y/n)?

Fuck, was it too early for

him

?

This date had been plaguing him for more than a week, his near-perfectionist nature unable to rest until he had

everything

right.

Osomatsu stopped tapping the table and ran his hand through his drying hair, lounging back once more on his bed as the red towel barely remained tucked around his waist. His dark eyes shifted from the paper to his fingers playing with his bangs, eyeing the longer length of hair.

Should he get it cut? Would it be obvious to (y/n)?

Ruffling his hair once more, Osomatsu decided against the haircut as he picked up the pen once more, scratching out something on the schedule before pressing the end of the pen into his bottom lip.

The schedule itself wasn't that complicated: a nice walk through the local park in the morning (or an early movie if it was raining), then a light lunch before heading to either the museum or planetarium. Afterwards, he obtained a reservation for a nice dinner, then they'd grab a front seat for the Chinese New Year parade before settling down for the night.

Osomatsu looked over the plan multiple times, ensuring that the timing worked out perfectly. The weather wouldn't really be an issue unless it started to rain a little later into the night, but the forecast had been reporting that it would be clear the entire day.

With a heavy sigh, he let his hands fall to his sides, letting his body sink down into the semi-firm bed as he relaxed.

Osomatsu wanted this New Year to be special, as it would mark the completion of one year dating (y/n). Their date at Kowloon Park a few months ago had marked the first time they kissed...but it was getting harder for him to not get greedy.

He wanted more...wanted

all

of her.

She was so shy about it that he couldn't help but fall harder for her whenever the subject was brought up about becoming physically closer as a couple, visually devouring the strawberry-pink color that her face turned whenever she blushed and nearly driving himself mad when he imagined that color underneath him.

Covering his eyes with a limp arm, he took in a deep breath through his nose in an attempt to calm himself down.

He knew he could get away with forcing himself on (y/n), but something within him kept his libido at bay, an odd feeling of wanting to do things at her pace.

It was so strange.

The shortened list of call girls next to his bed drew his attention, leaving only a handful of names that weren't crossed out by his hand. Osomatsu hadn't used the list in a few weeks, stunning himself as he needed it almost daily before he started dating (y/n).

He was turning over a new leaf...and he wasn't sure if he was completely against it anymore.

Standing up from the bed and allowing the towel to completely fall from his toned frame, Osomatsu moved towards his dresser and began to get ready for the day ahead of him.

(Y/n) stood near the train station where Osomatsu had instructed her to meet him, a large umbrella hanging off the crook of her elbow as she adjusted the small purse dangling over her shoulder. The chill morning was supposed to give way to a slightly warmer afternoon with a chance of rain later in the evening, but she wanted to be ready for anything weather-wise. The last time she was caught without an umbrella in a downpour, Osomatsu worried himself sick over her health, fussing over everything she did like a nervous parent.

(Y/n) smiled to herself at the fond memory, remembering when she had to fight him out of her bedroom because he kept interrupting her sleep by checking her temperature every ten minutes.

No, she was well prepared for the weather this time.

A heavy zippered red sweatshirt covered her frame, holding down a thin scarf that kept the wind from nipping at her neck. She wore a layered shirt in her favorite color over a black long-sleeved shirt that settled low around her waist, tucking into a gray skirt that rested tightly around her hips and natural waistline before flowing down to just above her knees. The skirt had a unique design and caught her eye at a thrift store near her apartment, the fabric continuing up towards her shoulders before looping back down towards the skirt, creating a dress of sorts. It buttoned up in the front from the waistline down to the hem, but (y/n) didn't mind the pattern. Black sheer stockings covered her legs to protect against most of the chill wind and calf-high boots ensured that her feet would be comfortable and warm.

"Aren't you a cutie?"

(Y/n) turned to face the speaker, her anger melting into embarrassment when she saw Osomatsu walking up to her.

He had abandoned the usual red jacket that he usually wore, swapping it instead with a black button-up jacket that rested just below his waist. The buttons were undone to reveal the plain white shirt left hanging over a pair of faded blue jeans, the hems of which were tucked into a pair of short brown boots.

It was a complete departure from his usual outfit, which usually consisted of him wearing brown loafers and a red sports jacket.

"Osomatsu."

"That's my name," He came close to her, lifting a hand and running it through her hair before raising a few strands to his lips. (Y/n) laughed a little nervously, fighting to keep her blush under control, "Are you ready for the day?"

"Yeah," She nodded, stepping close when he motioned to the space next to him, "You haven't told me much of what was happening today."

"Most of it is supposed to be a surprise," Osomatsu lay a protective arm around her shoulders, resting his hand on her right upper arm, "Well...if you want to know what the plan is, I can tell you."

"No, it can be a surprise," She shook her head a little, "I don't mind them when they come from you."

"I can say I'm ninety-five percent certain that you'll enjoy today," He gave (y/n) a wide smile.

"Only ninety-five? Why not one-hundred percent?"

"I may be one of the bosses of the city's underworld, but even I can't control the weather," Osomatsu partially hooded his eyes as his thumb trailed up (y/n)'s neck to rest under her jaw, pushing it up slightly as he bent down and kissed her on the lips, savoring the cinnamon flavor chapstick that she had used at some point today, "I'm not a god."

Osomatsu was cheering himself on, celebrating with an external smile and internal screams of joy when they walked through his surprise schedule for the day. He watched as (y/n) shed the red sweatshirt to reveal the full outfit underneath, offering to hold the red article for her to which she obliged. The bounce of the skirt as she walked was tantalizing to watch, but he kept himself in check.

He wouldn't ruin this day to satisfy his urges.

Her pace, her timing.

(Y/n) had chosen the planetarium, walking underneath the front overhang just as a light sprinkle began to fall from the mostly clear skies over the city. She laughed at the timing, asking if she'd be able to see the fox wedding. They waited until the sunshower was over before heading inside.

After he paid for their tickets, he followed (y/n) around as she looked through the exhibits with an almost child-like wonder, seeing her curiosity and fascination grow as they made their way through the building.

Osomatsu obliged when she wanted to take pictures, quickly learning that she only kept them on her computer at home and didn't spread them across any social media platforms. They kissed in front of a model of Earth as seen from the moon, snapping a quick picture that (y/n) saved as her phone's new background. Paying an additional fee for an auditorium viewing, the couple watched the program from their inclined seats, taking in the information about how ancient civilization viewed the stars and what different constellations meant to each culture.

He would never say it outloud, but this kind of thing never really interested him...however, he couldn't help but start to enjoy it when he saw the excitement on (y/n)'s face.

Their walkthrough was interrupted by a gurgle coming from (y/n)'s stomach, making her face turn red with embarrassment.

"Hungry already?" Osomatsu laughed a little, taking out his phone to see that it was almost five minutes to when he had allotted dinner to happen, smirking to himself at the near-perfect timing.

"Yeah," (Y/n) gave a light laugh in response, "The crepe from the park was good, but I guess my body's demanding more."

"That's okay. We can head out to a place near here," Tucking the phone back into his pocket, he offered the crook of his arm for her to hold.

"That sounds really good, actually," She slipped her slim hand underneath his bicep, her fingers curling over the muscle as she followed his lead through the remaining exhibit, "This has been a really fun day, Osomatsu."

"It's not over yet. I've still got a few things left to show you."

After eating at the restaurant where Osomatsu had put in a reservation, he gently took (y/n) by the hand and led her to a street that was beginning to

get packed with people waiting for something. Street performers had moved onto the blocked off roads, going down the street and giving the crowd some entertainment while they were waiting. (Y/n) had guessed that they were waiting for the New Year's Parade, earning a kiss as a prize for being correct. When the sun dipped down beneath the horizon, more people began to gather and Osomatsu stepped right behind (y/n), his arms loosely wrapped around the front of her waist to ward off any drunken fool that tried to look at her wrong.

The crowd grew denser as the time neared for the parade to start before the sky opened up suddenly, unleashing a downpour upon the jovial crowd. Shrieks of surprise and laughter echoed through the street as people scrambled for shelter while (y/n) swiftly brought up her own umbrella, opening it above their heads as they huddled underneath from the large drops.

"Well, looks like I was smart for bringing this along," (Y/n) laughed as she reached up to brush back Osomatsu's bangs, the rainwater partially undoing the holding gel.

"Mmm, yeah," He gave her a grateful smile before rubbing her cheek, "Looks like the parade will be postponed to tomorrow if this keeps up much longer."

"Was there a backup plan for this?"

"Nope," Osomatsu gave a sharp laugh before turning around and kneeling in front of her, offering a piggyback ride, "But let's get out of the rain before we both regret it."

"Right," She clung to his back as his arms pinned her knees to the sides of his waist, his hands interlocking with each other underneath her upper thighs. Keeping the umbrella steady above them, (y/n) watched as the street quickly emptied out while the temperature started to drop from the cold downpour.

"Train station is too far from here and the schedule could be canceled by the time we get there," Osomatsu sighed before turning a street corner, "I can

either get a hotel room for you to stay through the night or you can stay in my house."

(Y/n) dug her face into the crook of his neck, her face growing hot at the mention of either option, "Your place..."

"As you wish," He took a quick glance down the empty street and dashed across it, cutting down a smaller road that led to the ward where his family home was, "Are you able to pull out your phone?"

"Yeah," She reached into her purse and took out the phone, silently thankful for the waterproof casing she had bought recently.

"Go ahead and call this number. Let them know you're with me and we're on our way there," Osomatsu supplied the phone number for the private line, knowing that one of his brothers would pick it up. She began talking to someone, the timbre marking it as Todomatsu to Osomatsu's ears. The youngest brother asked her a few questions and she responded as accurately as she could about where they were, how long they'd take to get to the house, and how they were getting there. After the call, (y/n) put her phone away and clung to Osomatsu's neck, "You all right?"

"Mhmm," She nodded against his skin and he could feel her face heat up.

"We're almost there."

It had taken some convincing for (y/n) to even take a shower in his private bathroom, Osomatsu promising that he wasn't going to do anything. When she had stepped into the bathroom, he called a maid and ordered her to find some night clothes in (y/n)'s size before handing her the clump of their damp clothing with instructions to wash, dry, and fold them.

The maid simply bowed and went on her way with the dirty clothes.

Left alone in the bedroom with the shower running in his bathroom, he tossed about his hair and focused on anything else that wouldn't let his

imagination wander.

(Y/n) simply stared at the space around her when she entered Osomatsu's bathroom. The room was almost half the size of her own apartment, with the large furnishings putting her tiny bath and toilet to shame. The bathtub was completely separate from the shower, small jet heads poking out from the walls at different intervals to show that it was a jacuzzi tub. The shower was high with the head aimed straight down at the tiled floor, its circumference much wider than she thought they could ever be. The toilet wasn't anything special, but it matched the rest of the bathroom's extravagance somehow.

The towel that Osomatsu had given her after she stripped down in his room was large, too, gathering the radiating heat from her body and gently offering it back to her. She was tempted to not even shower. Glancing over at the water controls outside the shower, (y/n) finally figured out how to turn it on and warm the water enough to not scald her skin. There were a few bottles already in the shower caddy stuck to the tiled wall and she spotted a spare washcloth that had been left on the sink countertop by one of the hired staff.

Folding the comfy towel and laying it on the large countertop, (y/n) opened the glass door and walked into the running shower with the washcloth, the warm water instantly washing over her chilled skin like a waterfall.

If she had money like Osomatsu did, then she wouldn't regret getting this kind of shower in her apartment...actually, screw the apartment. She'd buy a smaller house and install this thing.

Pouring some of the shampoo onto her hand, she started lathering up, letting the shampoo work while she focused on scrubbing herself down with Osomatsu's body wash and spare washcloth.

The rainwater hadn't gotten them too wet on the way home, but the last block had a few large puddles that swelled from the rain, giving the couple impromptu baths when a car passed through them. She had laughed at Osomatsu's swearing, amused at his anger for her sake.

When her mental timer hit zero, (y/n) ducked back into the waterfall-like stream and let the pressure do all the work of rinsing her hair and skin off. The sweet scent of watermelon hit her nose as she opened the conditioner, looking at the brand and wondering if she'd be able to afford it before rubbing what she poured out into her hair. Letting the conditioner sit for a little longer to take in the last few smells of watermelon, she stepped back underneath the showerhead and completely rinsed everything off.

Squeezing out the water still held by her hair before leaving, she turned the shower off and wrapped the towel back around her, using the other side. (Y/n) ensured that every inch of her center mass was covered by the towel before opening the bathroom door, revealing the large bedroom that Osomatsu owned.

The large western-style bed was fully made with multiple pillows resting against the headboard and the comforter looked like a futon all on its own. Two large dressers adorned the wall near the bedroom door, leaving the wall that the bathroom was behind completely bare except for a few nice-looking paintings that were probably bought from a private collection. The only other wall was covered in drapes that hid the massive ceiling-length windows that let the daylight in when the black-out curtains were drawn back.

"Finished--?!"

Osomatsu's cautious voice drew her attention to the bedroom door, seeing him swiftly close it behind him when he realized she was just in the towel, his eyes shifting downward to fixate on the floor in the same motion. There were a few folded clothes tucked underneath his arm that he quickly moved to set on the bed, his gaze moving nowhere near her form.

"Yeah, I'm all done," She moved from the bathroom door to give Osomatsu space, hiding the seam of the towel so nothing showed on accident, "You can take yours now."

"Okay," He tried to nod, but the motion was lost as he moved towards the bathroom and gave her a wide berth, "I was able to grab some spare night clothes for you. They should fit, but let our maids know if they don't."

"Oh, okay," (Y/n) looked back towards the clothes on the bed, only moving towards them when Osomatsu closed the bathroom door behind himself. There was a traditional nightgown in a light pink color, a matching button-up shirt and shorts that were a little loose on her, and a long tank top shirt that went down to her thighs. Hearing the shower finally turn on after a few minutes, she looked over towards the bathroom with a soft smile before glancing back at the clothes, picking the matching shirt and shorts. There weren't any undergarments, so she'd rather have something covering her nether region to avoid any accidental viewings...not that there would be, right?

Osomatsu had been pretty tame compared to what she had read in various romance novels. Where the author had depicted a strong male that knew what he wanted and took it for himself with no apologies, Osomatsu had been the nearly opposite. He was gentle about the subject of...becoming closer as a couple and, while his kisses could become heated, (y/n) never once thought that he was doing too much at once. His surprised reaction at her first kiss was funny to remember and she was sure that she had been getting better at kissing him since...but she wasn't certain about anything else.

Slipping into the nightwear and putting the rest into a neatly folded pile on one of his dressers, (y/n) walked back to the bed and grabbed the towel, drying off her hair as much as she could before hanging the towel up somewhere and crawling onto the massive bed. The comforter was soft, much like a pillow, and the mattress underneath was firm enough to where she could lay down comfortably without sinking too deep.

"I needed that..." Osomatsu's voice became clearer as he opened the bathroom door, slightly surprising (y/n) as she looked over towards him. His chest was covered by a tight white tank undershirt, revealing smaller scars along his arms as the muscles flexed while he dried off his hair roughly. A pair of red sweatpants sat low on his waist and she tore her gaze away from the wide muscular 'v' that dipped underneath the front waistband of the sweatpants to focus on Osomatsu's face.

The fantasies needed to stay in her apartment...not here.

He noticed her towel hanging up and tossed both of them into a basket in the far corner of the room, running a hand through his slightly damp hair to try and manage the mess that his long locks were making.

"I really like your shower," (Y/n) pulled her legs close as he sat on the opposite side of his bed, catching his attention, "It's much bigger than the one in my apartment."

"Yours is nice because it's compact and meant for small spaces," He responded with a smile, resting his right leg on the bed while his left still dangled off the side, "I just had a lot of room to fill up."

"Which one would you use again?"

"Yours."

"Why?" She laughed at his quick answer.

"Because it's in

your

apartment," With his long bangs finally under some control, Osomatsu looked towards her with a smile, "What about you?"

"Definitely yours because it's nice and roomy," (Y/n) returned the smile, "Plus I don't mind standing up to wash myself instead of keeping stationary in a small area."

He hummed as he fully stretched out on the bed, laying an arm over his eyes, "Different styles for different people, I guess."

The bed shifted as (y/n) lay out on her side, leaving a 3-foot gap between them. Silence filled the room for a little while before Osomatsu spoke up.

"I'm sorry that the weather cut into my plans for today."

"No need to be sorry for that, Osomatsu," (Y/n) reached over and lightly touched the elbow of his propped up arm, "Nature has a mind of its own."

"Well, nature can just fuck off," He quipped, his frustration made evident by him partially gnawing his bottom lip, "I still had a few things that I wanted to do with you after the parade."

"Why not do them here?" (Y/n) withdrew her hand, resting it on her stomach as he pulled his arm away from his face, "That is...if they're something we're able to do here."

"It's possible that we can do one or two things here," He propped up his torso with his arms, looking over at her and meeting her gaze, "I could always order a cake since the little cafe is probably closed by now."

"I'd love some."

"All right, just gotta give time for the cook to do his thing," Osomatsu rolled onto his left side, reaching over for the landline and dialing in a number before placing the order. (Y/n) sat up as he placed the receiver down, "The staff said it'll be about thirty minutes. With that taken care of, what did you want to do in the meantime?"

"I'd...just like to talk," She adjusted herself to face him, watching as he shifted into a more comfortable sitting position on the bed. It was a little embarrassing to be sitting on her boyfriend's bed with nothing but the shirt and shorts she was given, but...it felt right, somehow.

"All right. What did you want to talk about?"

"Umm..." (Y/n) bit her inner cheek lightly, "What...brought you to Hong Kong?"

"My brother Karamatsu would say fate, but I'm not sure I believe in that kind of stuff," Osomatsu laughed a little, "No...my brothers and I were dragged here kicking and screaming from Japan."

"Oh...!" She swiftly covered her mouth with her hands, "I didn't mean to ask a serious question...!"

"It's okay," He gently took her right hand and lowered it from her mouth, "You've already asked why I have a Japanese name when I go by a Cantonese name here, so...this was probably the next logical step for you."

(Y/n) lowered her other hand, patiently waiting while Osomatsu gathered himself mentally.

"We were taken at a very young age, probably before we were 10, by a cruel man that smuggled us into Hong Kong...His intent was probably to sell us for physical labor or something that would pay him top dollar for young boys, but someone intervened and took us all under his wing. He was the closest thing we had to a father here," Osomatsu's eyes softened as he spoke of the man, "He taught us and raised us like his own, inheriting what you see when he died about ten years back."

"He must've been a great man," She gently placed a hand over his knee.

"Are you kidding? He was an asshole," He laughed before the kind look settled on his face once more, "But there were times where he was great."

"Well, I think he did a good enough job of raising you and your brothers," (Y/n) gave a small huff as the corners of her lips turned upwards in a smile, "You've been kind to me throughout our relationship without making any demands of me."

"Heh," Osomatsu turned his gaze from her hand to her eyes, "What about you? What brought you to Hong Kong?"

"Ah, it originally started as tourism," She laughed a little, "But the more I looked around, the more I wanted to live here...as weird as that sounds. I found a small place to stay, was able to get a job that sustained the rent, and immigrated over."

"I'm glad that you decided to stay," His hand slowly reached over and brushed against hers, a small blush spreading across his face as (y/n) turned her hand to intertwine their fingers.

"Me, too..." (Y/n) smiled for a moment before it faltered, taking the chance and leaning forward towards Osomatsu.

A knock sounded before she could give him a kiss, pulling away quickly and releasing his hand to cover her face. He let a heavy breath pass through his nose before climbing off the bed to open the bedroom door, giving the kitchen aid a nod as he took the small chocolate cake that was on a food tray with two plates and two forks next to it.

(Y/n) screamed at herself internally for blowing her opportunity, lowering her hands from her face to see Osomatsu put the cake down on the dresser before climbing back onto the bed and sitting in front of her once more.

"The cake can wait. Did...you want to keep going?" His voice was gentle, almost unsure if he should be asking the question.

The blush returned tenfold on her face and she clenched her fists to keep them from covering the embarrassment, giving a small nod as her answer. She waited a moment to see if he'd do anything before realizing that she'd have to make the first move, leaning in once again. Her lips pressed against his as (y/n) moved even closer, her chest resting against his as he returned the kiss.

There was something in the way he kissed that sent her nerves on fire, something heated and needy as his left hand gently rested against her right hip. (Y/n) blushed hard as her mind screamed for her to act out one of her bedroom fantasies with Osomatsu, unsure if he was even willing to do it, but the image in her head began to start heating up her core. His hand traveled up her side and shoulder to rest against the back of her head, slowly tangling itself up in her hair as he deepened the kiss. His lips danced across her cheek as she took in a breath, forgetting to breath through her nose, her nerves sparking as Osomatsu peppered a trail of kisses down to her neck.

"Just tell me to stop...and I will," There was almost a primitive growl in his voice as he warned her that she still had power here.

"Keep going..."

His other hand slid up her outer thigh to curl around into the small of her back, deftly ducking under the nightshirt a little as his tongue caressed her neck. A shuddering moan slipped through her lips before Osomatsu began kissing her again. (Y/n) returned his kisses as much as she could before the shy part of her mind broke.

"Osomatsu...I love you."

"I love you, too, my beautiful (y/n)," came his heated response. Her arms wrapped around his neck and she pressed herself more into him, knowing what she was doing but not caring. Everything he was doing felt good.

Pressing his hands into her back, he shifted his weight slightly and lowered her to the bed, careful to not let her drop. When she was underneath him, his hands planted themselves above her shoulders and he pulled away from the kiss, both of their faces heated.

"(Y/n)...I don't want to do anything to hurt you...and I don't want to do anything that would make you uncomfortable..." Osomatsu looked down at the woman underneath him, most of his body off to the side while his chest loomed over her, "I'm not the best with words, so I'm just going to say it...I want you. I want to fuck you senseless and fully claim you as mine..."

His words stoked the fire within her belly, her face reddening even more at his honesty.

"Please, Osomatsu..." (Y/n)'s voice whined out, "I don't want to wait any longer...I want you to make me yours."

He sucked in a sharp breath before diving back down, delivering a passionate kiss while resting a hand on her stomach. Her hands reached around his back and grabbed onto his tank top, the fabric stretching out a little bit as she tried to bring him closer to her.

(Y/n) wasn't sure how to make it any clearer to Osomatsu without screaming it out loud, softly moaning into the kiss as she felt his fingers swiftly unbutton the nightshirt, revealing her nude breasts to the open air. Breaking the kiss, he gently followed the rise of her chest with his lips,

cupping the other unattended breast in his hand. Letting out a pleasurable gasp, (y/n) shifted her arms to lay above her head and clung to the comforter as Osomatsu took a nipple in his mouth, his tongue and teeth caressing it while his hand mimicked the movement on the other breast.

With a heated moan, (y/n) realized that his free hand was still keeping him above her, laying her own on top of it. He instantly pinned it beneath his, intertwining their fingers as he played with her breasts.

"Osomatsu, more..." Her nerves were on fire, stoked to life by his careful actions, "Please keep going...!"

She couldn't tell if he laughed or moaned from her heated plea, but the movement of his hand sliding down from her breast to her abdomen was unmistakable. Slipping underneath the waistband of the shorts, his fingers began to massage her right thigh, moving closer towards her inner thigh as she opened her legs.

With a soft 'pop', his lips released her breast and moved back up to her lips, kissing her deeply as a finger ghosted over her mound. A smothered heated cry rolled from her throat into his mouth, drawing a small laugh from him.

"Are you sure you want this...?" Osomatsu asked after breaking the kiss.

"Yes, I want this...I want you," (Y/n) couldn't keep the pleasure out of her voice, bringing a smile to his face.

"

All of me?

"

"Ah...Osomatsu, yes--" She cried out as a light shudder trailed up her spine. She was

this close

from just the lightest touch?

Shifting himself down, Osomatsu hooked his fingers around the waistband of the shorts and gently pulled them all the way off, leaving her core completely exposed. The sudden cool air caressing her heated mound was enough to draw a moan from her lips before she realized he was opening her legs wider. The cool air was replaced by his heated breath and (y/n) gripped the comforter tightly in her hands as something wet lay itself over her intimate part, her voice tensing up as the wet thing slipped in between her folds.

The wet appendage slowly lapped at her entrance, taking long strokes from the bottom all the way to her sensitive nub before pulling away and repeating the motions again. He never changed the pace, only pressing down a little harder after a certain amount of time. (Y/n) couldn't think straight anymore, her senses completely overloaded with whatever he was doing to her.

When he finally changed the pattern, it drew a surprised cry from her as his tongue slipped in

deeper

between her folds, teasing her entrance and sending her close to the edge of a climax. (Y/n)'s breathing grew ragged as Osomatsu slightly picked up the pace before she felt something else slip in deeper still. His tongue brushed against her sensitive nub and she covered her mouth before she could scream, her body tightening and growing rigid as it rode out her orgasm.

She closed her eyes tightly as she felt her walls spasm, grasping for something that was no longer there before settling down and allowing her body to relax once more. Her hand fell away from her mouth as strained moans rolled from her chest, her eyes avoiding contact with Osomatsu. (Y/n) wasn't sure how he felt about her climaxing before they even had sex...but she felt disappointed in herself. She wanted her first intercourse climax to happen when

he

was inside of her, not

his finger

.

"(Y/n)...look at me..."

Osomatsu's gentle voice drew her attention down to him, seeing him still kneeling between her legs with a soft smile on his face. He reached up with his clean hand and brushed away a tear that started to roll down her cheek.

"Did you want me to keep going?"

Her eyes widened a little before closing them in a nod, realizing that he didn't see a problem with what happened. If he wasn't bothered by it, then she wouldn't be either.

(Y/n) was pulled from her thoughts as he bent back down, his tongue cleaning her up while his finger gently pushed and prodded at her entrance before slipping back in. With the orgasm making her nerves hyperactive, every movement he made inside her sent a wave of pleasure through her spine to hit her head. Soon, he slipped a second finger in to work in tandem with his tongue, slowly thrusting in and out while rubbing against her inner walls.

After a short while, Osomatsu completely removed himself and took off his tank top before nestling his upper waist between her legs. The skin contact sent her mind reeling as he moved upwards, stopping once his head was above hers. Pressing his lips against (y/n)'s, he lowered himself and lay his bare chest on hers, letting her feel every muscle in his torso while they kissed. (Y/n) looked up at Osomatsu in slight confusion when he lifted his head to break the kiss, slowly realizing that her legs were open a bit wider and resting on top of his own bare legs.

Shifting her eyes to look back up at him, she gave him a nod before he kissed her once more, one of his hands reaching down to dance across her entrance. Something hard pressed against her folds -- much larger than his fingers -- before easily sliding in as she moaned into the kiss. When she expected a sharp thrust like the romance books had described, Osomatsu

instead pulled back out before slowly entering her once more and pushing in a little further with each penetration.

(Y/n) broke the kiss as she panted out his name, his lips connecting once more and fueling the fire now raging in her belly once more as he fully hilted inside of her. There was no pain as he thrusted into her, his hands wrapping around her back and clinging to her shoulders to keep her in place as the kiss became more desperate, more needy between the pair. She didn't care how loud she was being; everything he did felt

amazing

.

The pace he was at became a little faster as he lowered his head to kiss her breasts once more, drawing cries of pleasure from her as she felt that familiar-yet-different wave begin to crest in her core. The second orgasm came swiftly for (y/n), crashing onto her nerves and igniting every sense in her body, the constant thrusting quickly pushing her over the edge a third time after his mouth sealed hers in a heated kiss.

Everything that Osomatsu was doing was going beyond what she could imagine, his touches gentle enough to not hurt while creating a blissful sensation that she couldn't replicate on her own.

He was breaking her, making her wholly his...

...and (y/n) wanted him to keep going.

His pacing faltered for just a moment before picking back up, the sound of skin slapping against skin somehow turning her on even more as his arms wrapped around her back, pressing their chests together. The sweaty skin-on-skin contact only stoked her raging inferno more as their nipples rubbed together momentarily before Osomatsu's breathing hitched and she felt his member twitch deep inside of her, the brief movement triggering her next orgasm as her walls tightened around his shaft.

Osomatsu bit into the comforter next to (y/n)'s neck, his animalistic growls sending a pleasurable wave down to her core as he pounded into her, the last few thrusts much harder than before as she felt thick ropes of heat cascade into her womb. The sensation was nearly indescribable as she cried out in a heated mewl, wanting more despite knowing that both of them were probably completely spent.

Letting go of the comforter, Osomatsu slowly pulled out of her trembling sheath before laying next to her, his arms pulling her close to him as he pressed his forehead against her temple, "(Y/n)...that was amazing..."

"Mhmm..." Her throat was too sore to form words, simply laying in his arms as they took deep breaths.

"I know...that you wanted more...but that's all I can give right now," He laughed a little, his breath tickling her ear, "Let's rest for the night...and see what happens in the morning, okay?"

"Okay..." (Y/n) closed her eyes as her body finally registered its fatigue from the passionate sex, "Hey...Osomatsu?"

"Yeah...?" His voice sounded tired as his grip on her loosened a little, "What is it, (y/n)?"

"For my first time, I'd say that was worth waiting for..."

He was silent.

(Y/n) opened her eyes and glanced over to see that he was still awake, staring at her dumbfoundedly before a confident smirk pulled at his lips.

"Damn...took another first without knowing it. I'm getting pretty good at that with you," He leaned in close and gave her a gentle kiss.

"I guess so..." (Y/n) laughed in response as her body finally pulled her mind into sleep, her muscles completely relaxing as Osomatsu whispered in her ear.

"Let's see how many more firsts I can take from you..."

MatsuNoir!Osomatsu x Reader, Part 3

Inspired by shimmering_clouds's prompt.

(continuation of Parts 1 and 2)

(Y/n) sat on the edge of Osomatsu's bed, the handwritten note clenched between her hands as she read its contents over and over.

'My beautiful (y/n),

I want you to stay in my house tonight. If you need a reason, it's because I've got an uneasy feeling about a job tonight and I want you to be in a place where I know you're safe. My house is the best option. Bring some clothes to last the weekend and I'll arrange for a taxi to bring you to work on Monday...but I want peace of mind. A guy that we're gonna take care of tonight is known for being tricky and underhanded with deals.

You're my only weakness (besides my brothers).

I'll be home as soon as I'm able.

Your Osomatsu.'

She set the letter down on the bedside table, looking at it for a moment longer before scooting herself back onto the bed, tugging down the comforter and top sheet. His bed was much more comfortable than her twin-sized mattress, and she had already snuck in a shower to use his shampoo and conditioner.

(Y/n) pulled the top sheet over her as she slid into the bed, resting her watermelon-scented body and letting sleep wash over her.

Standing on the balcony that overlooked the large pool in the backyard, (y/n) raised a hand to shield her eyes from the early afternoon sun, looking towards a gathering of three men sitting on patio chaise lounges. She had received a notice that Osomatsu had made it back safely when she woke up and wanted to see him as soon as she was dressed.

"Osomatsu...!" (Y/n) called out towards the three, seeing two of them partially turn towards her while the third fully turned her way, his long messy hair pushed back out of his face as he gave a wave. Seeing him motion her over, (y/n) obliged and walked down the stairway towards the three, seeing a spread of different objects in front of them on different tables near their chairs.

Osomatsu had a bowl of food that he was still eating, but a black pistol lay on the table sitting next to a wad of cash, a partially empty cup, and an open bottle of clear alcohol. A simple white shirt covered his torso while a pair of pale blue swim trunks hugged his waist, several detailed fronds of a palm tree covering the outside of the right leg. He adjusted how he was sitting to let (y/n) lay next to him, patting the cushion as reaffirmation. (Y/n) sat where she was instructed, looking at the other two men accompanying him.

She recognized Choromatsu from a previous meeting, seeing his shortened hair styled up while his dark eyes focused entirely on the task within his hands. He was wearing a green camouflage hoodie, the sleeves rolled up just below his elbows and the zipper completely undone, revealing his bare chest. Choromatsu also wore a pair of swim trunks, split horizontally by a thin band of yellow that divided the coloration between black and green. A pair of sandals lay just beneath his bare feet. Metal bits caught the sunlight as they were laid out in perfect order on the table, his fingers quickly applying a cloth soaked in some foul-smelling liquid to each metal part. Every now and then, Choromatsu paused in his cleaning work to glance at a folded-over magazine, flipping through the pages during each short break before returning to clean his fully disassembled gun.

The third man was someone she hadn't met before, his long dark hair tied back into a rough bun while sunglasses covered his eyes. He was fully lounging on the chaise with his right hand behind his head while his left held open a book, his pinky flipping the pages as he read through the story.

The little table next to him simply held a teacup and saucer, the cup still full from whenever it was poured. (Y/n) didn't miss the black pistol resting on his lap, his right leg propped up a little on a pillow. She looked away when she realized the third man had caught her staring.

"...you're (y/n), then," He spoke with a low voice, almost a growl.

"Y-yes..." She nodded, catching Osomatsu's eye as he looked at her sudden change in demeanor.

"Did I not introduce you two yet?" He laughed as he set his food down, pointing towards the third man, "This is Ichimatsu, the fourth brother of the family."

Ichimatsu didn't say anything, only flipping a page over as a response.

"It's a pleasure, Mr. Ichimatsu..." (Y/n) gave another nod, barely seeing Ichimatsu dip his head in return. After the 'conversation' died, she took a breath and faced her boyfriend, "Osomatsu, I thought you were going to wake me up after you got home."

"I did," Osomatsu shrugged, grabbing the wad of cash and thumbing through the bills, discarding one every once in a while, "You fell back asleep, so I let you rest for as long as you wanted."

"Oh..." She settled into the seat next to him, feeling her thigh against his, "I don't remember that happening."

"It must've been a really good dream, then," Choromatsu commented as he began to assemble his pistol, the metal clacking once in a while before he pulled the slide into place with a satisfied smirk on his face.

"Why do you guys keep your weapons on you?" (Y/n) looked at the brothers, her eyes making note that the pistols were all within reach of the owners, "I thought you said that this was the safest place you knew, Osomatsu."

"It is, but even paradise can have its predators," Osomatsu fastened the wad of bills together, tossing them over to Choromatsu before picking up his food again. The third brother caught the money in his offhand, tucking it into his hoodie pocket before setting down the assembled pistol.

"But...the job went well?" She lifted a hand to rest on Osomatsu's back, feeling his muscles flex underneath her touch. He moved his head to look at her from over his shoulder, a smile pulling back the corner of his lips before she felt something warm spread under her hand. Looking over at it confused, (y/n) saw a red stain spreading outwards before registering the pain in her hand, both hers and Osomatsu's blood flooding down her forearm as she pulled her numb hand away from his back.

Choromatsu and Ichimatsu jumped up and began to fire their pistols towards the fenceline, the older of the two standing between the attacker and Osomatsu as the oldest leaned forward heavily. (Y/n) cried out as more gunshots sounded, grabbing Osomatsu's bloodied shirt with her good hand and pulling him towards her, the couple falling off of the chaise and onto the pavement behind it. The chaise was flipped over for broader cover, another chaise landing next to it before both brothers vaulted behind it.

"Move him to the house! We'll cover you!" Ichimatsu grunted as bullet spray scattered across the pool and into the thick wooden chaise, sliding the empty magazine out while pulling out a full one from his shorts.

(Y/n) stood there speechless before Osomatsu dragged her close, pressing her against his chest and kissing her roughly, "Babe, you gotta do it...I can't move much anymore..."

She bit her bottom lip as tears streamed down her cheeks, grabbing one of his arms and slinging it over her shoulders. Getting a nod from Choromatsu, they stood up at the same time, (y/n) stumbling with Osomatsu towards the balcony stairs that led into the house while Choromatsu and Ichimatsu covered her back.

There was a pause in the gunfight before another round of bullets scattered on the stairway, causing (y/n) and Osomatsu to dive forward while the other two jumped back. Osomatsu grunted from the impact, grabbing (y/n) by her

shirt and throwing her up towards the landing as another wave of gunfire opened up.

"What the hell?!" (Y/n) barely looked up to see Todomatsu standing over her, assault rifle in hand and opening fire on whoever was attacking them. A pair of hands grabbed at her uninjured arm, pulling her into the house.

"No...! Get Osomatsu!" She screamed in fear, looking back towards the limp form of her boyfriend on the stairs. The person grabbing at her didn't let go, but another figure leapt over her body and vaulted down the stairs. The blue dragon tattoo along his arm labeled him as Karamatsu, the second oldest quickly slinging the oldest brother over his shoulders and rushing back to the house.

"Ah...! Watch the wound, asshole...!" Osomatsu cried out as he was set down roughly, his hand pressing against the bullet hole cutting through his torso. Karamatsu barely glanced up at him.

"If you have time to scream, then you're fine."

"Can I kill them?!" A sixth voice laughed out, (y/n)'s arm in the speaker's tight grip.

"Go for it," Osomatsu winced as Karamatsu shoved something into the wound, a muffled hissing sound squeezing out from some sort of tube as a thick white foam expanded from the bullet hole. The oldest screamed and swore vividly as the foam stopped expanding, Karamatsu pulling the tube from the wound and moving towards (y/n), grabbing her hand and shoving the tube into the hole she didn't realize was there.

The hissing sound echoed from within her hand and she cried in pain, feeling something hot brand itself

inside

her hand and press outward.

"It'll stop the bleeding for now," Karamatsu grunted as he stood up, pulling out a pistol from a rear holster, "Move Osomatsu down to the infirmary."

"But what about--"

"

Do it!

" He nearly screamed at (y/n), his eyes furious while his lips pulled back into a snarl. (Y/n) jumped back before scrambling towards Osomatsu, pulling him up from his slouched position and wrapping his arm around her shoulders again. With whatever strength she had left, (y/n) hoisted Osomatsu up onto his feet and began walking him away from the balcony, moving towards a long hallway that had a short staircase leading to the first floor.

The hallway seemed to stretch on forever before the staircase finally came into view, her uninjured hand reaching out to grab the railing for stability. Osomatsu followed her down slowly, taking each step as cautiously as he could before falling from her grip on the last step, his body hitting the polished wood floor with a hollow thud.

"Osomatsu...!" (Y/n) knelt down and tried to pick him up again, her wounded hand making the urgent task much more difficult as she grasped for some kind of purchase with her good hand, her fingers slipping on the wet cloth, "Osomatsu, you need to get up!"

Her heart thundered in her ears, drowning out the sounds of the gunfight as she finally forced him to roll onto his back. She muttered his name over and over as she grabbed one of his hands, trying to drag him towards the infirmary and not knowing if she was crying out for help. His heartbeat felt weak within his wrist and (y/n) choked out a cry as she looked down towards his limp form.

"Stay with me...!" She cried out, tears streaming down her face as she pressed her head against Osomatsu's chest, calling out for help from anyone in the area, "Please! Someone save Osomatsu...!"

"(Y/n)..." Osomatsu's voice sounded tired and weak, one of his hands cupping her left cheek and wiping away some of her tears with his thumb, "You need to be strong...for both of us."

"No, don't talk like that!" She shook her head and tried to drag him towards the infirmary once more before he pulled his hand from hers, "Osomatsu, you need to live...don't leave me alone...!"

"I'd never leave you alone," He gave a gentle smile, "I promised that I'd look after you, didn't I...?"

"Then you need to stay alive!" (Y/n) knelt next to him once more, her injured hand trembling harshly on his shoulder as she tried to drag him back to his feet.

"Not...sure that's possible for me anymore."

"Stop...don't say it!"

"Then I won't..." Osomatsu grunted before looking up at her with his familiar smirk. She caught the uncertain look in his dark eyes before he closed them, the smirk slipping into a neutral look as he rested his head against the floor.

"Osomatsu...?"

Silence.

"Osomatsu, wake up..." She crawled over to him and lifted his head onto her lap, rubbing the dirt and blood from his face as she called his name softly over and over.

"Osomatsu!" (Y/n) screeched, bending over and pressing her forehead to his cooling skin, her tears falling onto his closed eyes and trailing down the sides of his face. She pulled away, screaming towards the heavens as fear and anger rose in her chest.

(Y/n) flinched as she slowly registered the ceiling of Osomatsu's bedroom while her hands clung to the bedsheets resting over her. Sweat stuck to her

brow as she sat up in bed, looking around frantically for the dead man. A muffled conversation could be heard outside the door, drawing her like a moth to a flame before she pulled open the door to look out into the corridor.

Three men walked down the corridor, her mind slowly piecing together their identities as the dream remained fresh in her mind.

The man in a long green coat with a furred hood slightly rolled his eyes at something one of the other two said, his pointed frown tightening a little before he looked back towards the other two men. His dark ruffled and spiked hair stood out from the other two longer styles, and the dark layered shirt underneath the coat complimented the dark tan pants tucked into black boots.

The man to his left was in a black coat with a furred hood, the black shirt underneath meshing perfectly over the dark blue patterned long shorts that just rested over the dark green boots. His hair was just as dark as the other two, combed forward to create a playboy look that made him flick his head to the side every so often to move the bangs out of his face.

The third man was the one (y/n) was staring at, her colored eyes looking straight at his white shirt. The piece of clothing was completely clean of anything blood-colored or stain, tucked safely underneath the black jacket he had on and barely resting on the waistline of the bright blue jeans. The man looked away from the other two, laughing about something before his face dropped all jovial emotion, making eye contact with (y/n) as she clung to the frame of the doorway. He lifted a hand towards the other two, moving towards her while the others turned around and walked down the hallway.

"(Y/n), what's--" The familiar voice was cut off as he neared the door, caught off-guard as (y/n) launched herself at him. Taking a step back to brace himself, Osomatsu caught her as she pressed her face into his chest, his arms wrapping around her shoulders when they began to shake, "Sweetheart, are you all right?"

"You didn't die, did you...?" Her voice was muffled against his shirt, both of her hands gripping tightly to the fabric. She didn't let go as Osomatsu

carefully picked her up, bringing her back into the dark bedroom and closing the door behind him. Navigating in the dark was easy when some of the bed was illuminated by the digital clock on his bedside table, gently laying (y/n) back down.

"No, I didn't die," He lightly rubbed his hand over her head, his fingers gently pulling out some tangles as he stayed in the uncomfortable position she had forced him to keep. Shrugging off the jacket and tossing it towards the door, Osomatsu slipped out of the loose white shirt still stuck in her grip and moved towards the lightswitch, flicking it on before sitting next to (y/n) on the bed.

"But...my dream was so real..." (Y/n) clung to the shirt like a safety blanket, her eyes red and puffy as tears fell from them, "You had said you were back from a job...and then someone shot you."

"Well, I don't have a scratch on me," He didn't move as she shifted to explore where he could guess his dream self was shot, her fingers pressing against his left pectoral before trailing down to his abdomen. A ghost of a scar resided where she explored, but there were no fresh wounds for her to find. He had been careful this time around and smiled gently down at (y/n) when she looked up at him for confirmation, "See?"

A look of relief washed over her face before Osomatsu saw the tears come back, gathering her in his arms as she wrapped her arms around his neck.

"I...was so scared...!" (Y/n) managed between sobs, "You were shot...and there was nothing I could do...!"

"Shh," He whispered softly, kissing her soaked cheeks while rubbing his hands in slow circles on her back, "I'm here...I'm safe."

Osomatsu gently lay them both down on the bed, resting with him facing the ceiling while (y/n) still clung to him like a newborn, curling up next to him and resting her head against his chest. Slowly, she tired herself out from crying, and he felt her give a soft sigh before the sobbing completely stopped. Osomatsu lifted one of his hands to run through her hair, the faint scent of watermelon catching his attention and bringing a smile to his face.

"Sleep...I'll be here when you wake up."

--Mature-- MatsuNoir!Osomatsu x Reader, Part 4

Inspired by shimmering_clouds's prompt.

WARNING! This is a mature chapter, and meant for an 18+ audience. If you're younger than that, I respectfully ask that you find something else to read.

If you're older than 18, you may continue at your own discretion.

This story contains sexual scenes (female to male) and scenes of BDSM (sub/dom pairing).

"(Y/n)? What are you doing here?"

She looked over her shoulder to see one of the sextuplets leaning through the doorway to the kitchen, recognizing the lighter hair that was swept to the left side of his face, "Oh, Todomatsu. Good evening. I was just wanting to make something small before Osomatsu got home."

"You know that we can order the staff to make it, right?" The youngest brother stepped into the kitchen, glancing at some of the cooks that were preparing dinner, "You don't need to do it yourself."

"I know, but I haven't baked something in forever and I have a feeling that you all would enjoy it," (Y/n) gave a soft smile before turning back to her self-appointed task. The components were mixing together in a stirring bowl, her arm working in circles to combine everything before it was to be poured into a baking dish, "Sorry if I broke some rules..."

"No..." Todomatsu trailed off, leaning against the counter to see what she was working on, "Not as far as I know. Did you get permission from the head chef?"

"I did," She nodded in response, stirring a bit more before tilting the bowl towards the dish, letting the thick mixture pour into it, "He said that it was fine as long as I didn't get in the way and cleaned up after myself."

Todomatsu raised an eyebrow and took a quick look at the spot (y/n) had chosen to bake in. It was as far into the corner as she could get without digging a hole through the wall, and the 'mess' that she had made was very self-contained. If he didn't know better, he'd say that she was being punished for daring to cook in their kitchen.

"It seems like you're following his demands very carefully," The comment left his lips before he realized he said it outloud.

"I know...but I'd rather be careful and not betray the little trust I was given," (Y/n) scraped out the last bit of batter from the bowl and spread the mixture evenly in the baking dish, using a butter knife to clean off the rubber scraper and add what was left over onto the dish. The scent that the mixture gave off smelled strongly of chocolate.

"Brownies?"

"Yep! Something simple but delicious," Todomatsu followed her with his eyes as she moved the baking dish to an oven that was already warmed up, opening the door and sliding the glass baking dish in before closing the door and starting a timer, "It's not much, but I figured no one could say no to chocolate."

"You know that Osomatsu is allergic to chocolate, right?" Todomatsu could barely hide the smirk as (y/n) turned towards him in shock, her face completely dropping the happy look and replacing it with worry.

"Well...uh..." She fumbled with her words, worriedly looking at the oven, "I didn't know...I thought it was a good idea..."

"It

is

a good idea," Todomatsu turned away before she could see the smile breaking through his neutral mask, "Just ask next time you try to make something, okay?"

"Oh...okay," The tone in (y/n)'s voice sounded completely defeated, her focus staying on the oven that held the brownies.

Todomatsu moved from the kitchen towards the front lobby of his family's mansion, covering his mouth with a hand to keep the laughter in.

Ever since (y/n) had officially moved into their home, he had found that teasing (y/n) about her fiance was becoming more and more of a fun habit. Yes, he'd get beaten up every time Osomatsu found out about the teasing, but the reactions that (y/n) gave him were more than enough payment to continue doing it. Last week, Todomatsu completely convinced (y/n) that Osomatsu was sick of her cleaning his room and the week prior was a simple lie of Osomatsu always keeping his clothes folded a certain way.

The teasing was always innocent enough, Todomatsu knowing that anything beyond that would absolutely ruin the relationship his oldest brother and her had. She already had enough to worry about when Osomatsu went out for a job and stayed out for days at a time; adding anything about cheating to that would absolutely destroy her.

Todomatsu liked to have his fun, but never at a serious expense like that.

"You're happy about something."

His thoughts were interrupted as he walked towards his large office, glancing over his shoulder to see two other faces of his. The similarly styled jackets made the two look like twins.

"Karamatsu, Choromatsu," He stated, reaching out and pushing open the office door, "Just having some fun before getting to work."

"You're not messing with (y/n) again, are you?" Karamatsu rested a hand on his hip, tilting his head to the side a little.

"Not entirely," Todomatsu avoided looking into the second oldest's eyes, leaving his office door wide open as he made his way to his desk, sitting down in the chair and starting to rifle through the paperwork that had been dropped off since this afternoon.

"Aren't Osomatsu and Ichimatsu due back from their assignment tonight?" Choromatsu followed Todomatsu into his office, sitting in one of the chairs before raising his hand to fiddle with his metal dog tags around his neck.

"If everything goes well, then they're due back in an hour or so," Todomatsu slipped into business mode, flipping through some paperwork before looking at one of the sheets more closely, "This should be the last assignment for a while. The gang was shaken up enough with the last hit you two did, so this should seal the deal for a solid few months before they try to act out again."

"You know they will?" Karamatsu took a few steps into the office, leaning against the back of the other chair as he raised an eyebrow.

"They

always

do. It's what happens with a power vacuum," The youngest sighed heavily, "Take out the head and someone else will step into the reins, more than likely being a worse human being than the previous leader."

The older two brothers exchanged a look of understanding. They'd seen it so many times that it would be unexpected for that to

not

happen.

"Well, with Osomatsu and Ichimatsu coming back tonight, does that mean Jyushimatsu's work can begin?" The third-oldest crossed his right leg over

his left.

"Not for a few days, but I'm sending him out there early," Todomatsu set the papers back down on his desk, leaning back in his seat, "If he finds a window to start working on the next gang, he'll take it."

"And our assignment?" Karamatsu focused on Todomatsu's desk, searching for something that would give him the answer before the youngest sextuplet could answer.

"Postponed for now," Todomatsu finished arranging the paperwork into different manilla folders before leaning back in his chair, "The reports said that there's too much movement and attention before we can start the job."

"Totty," Choromatsu didn't flinch when the youngest snapped a harsh glare towards him, visibly disliking the childish nickname that the brothers continued to call him, "You don't need to listen to me, but let me just ask that you give Osomatsu a few days off. You've been running him ragged and I think he's due a breather once in a while."

"He's just as stubborn as Karamatsu. Both of you know this," Todomatsu ignored the pointed glare from the second-eldest, "If I tell him that he's off of a job to recuperate, then he'll get fussy and start growing antsy at home."

"That was before (y/n) moved in."

"

That

wasn't my fault. I'd rather not have her here, but our eldest brother has something up his ass about her being safer here than in her own home," The youngest sighed heavily as he closed his eyes for a moment, opening them with a harsh inhale of air, "I'll let him know when he gets here, but I'm pointing the finger at you if he starts complaining tomorrow about not going out."

Silence filled the office before Karamatsu stood up, heading towards the door.

"I'll tell him."

Osomatsu groaned loudly as he slammed the bedroom door behind him, slinging the jacket off of his arms and tossing it onto the small office chair near the desk by the window.

Getting word that he was homebound for the next three days wasn't the news he was wanting to hear when he just came home from a five-day long stint harassing one of the newer gangs in the area. He just wanted to take a shower, eat dinner, and collapse into the bed.

Pulling off his shirt and unfastening his pants, he took a much longer shower than normal, standing in the water and just letting its warmth cascade over his skin. Placing his left hand on the cold tile wall in front of him, he leaned forward and ran his other hand through his soaking wet hair, letting the water pressure push the long hair back over his face again.

Scrubbing himself clean, Osomatsu turned off the water before lightly patting his face down with his towel, groaning into the soft fabric again while drying off his body. Quickly wrapping it around his waist, his dark eyes caught sight of the new scar creating a nearly perfect circle just in front of his right shoulder, his hues darkening at the memory of the fight.

Well, (y/n)'s not going to like seeing that

, Osomatsu hummed to himself before opening the bathroom door, moving towards the dresser that held his clothes and slipping into comfortable clothes for the night.

Speaking of (y/n), he hadn't even thought to look for her when he came home since he was distracted by Karamatsu immediately intercepting him near the front parlor.

He didn't completely ignore her, did he?

Ruffling his hair with the towel before discarding it near his laundry, Osomatsu stretched and opened his bedroom door, nearly walking right into (y/n)'s hand that was raised like she was about to knock.

"(Y/n)!" He took a few steps back, opening the door wider for her to enter when he realized that she was balancing a tray full of food with her off-hand, "Geez, I'm sorry...let me help."

(Y/n) gave a soft smile as he took the tray, walking towards the bed and setting it down, "You don't need to be sorry, Osomatsu. I just wanted to give you dinner while it was still fresh, since we finished eating a little while ago."

"Ah, shit," He sighed heavily, "I missed it?"

"I don't think you missed anything important," (Y/n) shook her head a little, walking into his bedroom and closing the door softly behind her, "I made you dessert, though."

Osomatsu looked back down at the food, seeing a small glass bowl with saran wrap over it. The contents of the bowl looked to be something similar to rice pudding or tapioca pudding, the cream-colored dessert appearing very appealing.

"You made this?" He gently lifted up the small glass bowl, peeling back the wrapping and sniffing at the dessert. It smelled strongly of vanilla and cinnamon.

"Yeah. I made a large batch of it since..." Her voice tapered off before she spoke once more, "Well, I thought I'd give it a try."

"I thought that you said that you were making some kind of surprise with chocolate?" Osomatsu gently placed the bowl back down onto the tray, looking to (y/n) as she visibly flinched at his words, her eyes refusing to meet his. His dark eyes hooded as he recognized the familiar signs, "Did Totty tell you differently?"

"He said that you were allergic to chocolate, so I thought I would play it on the safe side with something vanilla," (Y/n) nodded a little, her hair partially covering her face as her hands wrung against each other.

"(Y/n)," Her name was quiet on his lips as Osomatsu moved to hold her against him, "You do remember that I ordered us

chocolate

cake on New Years, right?"

He had to hold back from laughing as a look of instant realization settled on her face.

"Don't worry about it. I'm sure my brothers are enjoying your original dessert," Osomatsu leaned down and kissed (y/n)'s forehead, releasing her from his hold and walking towards the bed with the intention of eating dinner, "Well, thank you for bringing this to me."

"I didn't just come here to bring you dinner," Osomatsu could hear her nervousness in her voice, pausing in chewing a bite of chicken breast to look up at her, "I overheard your brothers talking about you having a break for a few days and, since it's been a while since we had the chance to sit down and just enjoy each other's company, I thought it would be nice to offer you a massage afterwards?"

He couldn't help but smile as the confidence (y/n) started with began to fade as she finished her sentence, swallowing the food in his mouth before speaking, "Well, you're more than welcome to stay. It's not as lavish as your room, but you can stay and chat with me."

A look of relief washed over (y/n)'s features, quickly taking a seat on the office chair after moving his coat into a more appropriate place, scooting forward until she was within reach.

"How long has it been, (y/n)?"

"Since we've talked face-to-face?" She pressed a finger against her bottom lip, "I think it's been close to a week."

"I guess that's pretty close to accurate," Osomatsu finished the meat and started on the potatoes, stirring in the partially melted butter and spices before eating again, "Is there anything that you want to update me on?"

"No, not really."

"Besides Todomatsu messing with you again?"

"You...don't need to talk to him about it," (Y/n) shook her head, loose strands of hair collecting over her face before she tucked them behind her ears, "I mean, he wasn't been completely mean about it, so I'll just consider it more of a nuisance than anything else."

"He still shouldn't be harassing you about anything," He furrowed his brow, finishing the potatoes a lot faster than expected and focusing on the green beans.

"Oh, I don't think it's harassment. I just kinda figured that since I'm dating you, it's more of a family thing...you know, siblings teasing each other and messing around?"

"Just...let me know if he says anything that really makes you upset, okay?" Osomatsu reached out and gently touched her knee, drawing her attention to him, "He may be my brother, but that doesn't excuse the poor behavior towards you."

"If he does say something that upsets me, I'll let you know when I can."

With her confirmation, Osomatsu finished off the dinner and reached for the dessert, carefully unwrapping it and spooning it into his mouth. The flavor was just what his nose told him to expect, the sugar almost too much while not being enough at the same time. Finishing the small dish off in a few bites, he set the bowl down on the tray before moving the tray to the dresser next to the bedroom door, letting his hand caress (y/n)'s left arm as he walked past her towards the bed again.

"Now, with food done and out of the way," He crossed his left leg underneath his right knee, leaning back as he used both hands to prop himself up, "What kind of massage should I be looking forward to?"

A furious blush swallowed (y/n)'s face, Osomatsu's dark eyes partially hooding as he understood a bit of what was going on in her mind. While they had been dating for almost a year-and-a-half, he had picked up on what a lot of her physical cues meant and how to go about defusing or intensifying her reactions to whatever was going on.

The blush only meant that she had other plans in mind in lieu of just the massage by itself.

He waited patiently for her to answer his question however she wished. Of course, he'd go along with whatever she wanted to do, knowing that she was much more innocent than he was in the bed. It didn't mean that he wasn't looking forward to finding out what her surprise would be, either. Osomatsu would play the patient boyfriend as (y/n) tried something new with him, yet he'd be lying if he said he wasn't excited about it.

"I guess you'll just have to find out when it happens," (Y/n) managed to finish, trying to give him a coy smile that only managed to widen his own smile.

"Well, I look forward to it," He sat back up fully, "Did you want me on my back or on my chest?"

"Your back is fine," (Y/n) stood up as Osomatsu laid out flat on his bed, getting into a comfortable position while she moved to something on the desk. As he waited for further instructions, he felt her hands starting to rub against his right foot, her deft fingers gently working out the knots and kinks in his ankle. Osomatsu closed his eyes and placed his right arm over them, completely relaxing as (y/n) slowly worked her way up to his calf muscle.

SIlence filled the room as she continued her massage, leading to his upper thigh before switching to his left upper thigh and working her way down. Osomatsu could feel himself start to fall into a light sleep, fighting to stay

awake so he wouldn't insult her by conking out before she unleashed her surprise. He had no idea what it was, but he definitely wanted to be awake when it happened.

"Am I doing okay?"

"If it hurt, I would've told you," His voice sounded groggy, making him partially wonder if she had done something to the food. Osomatsu had used all kinds of drugs that would knock a person out, concluding that this was just his body relaxing under her touch.

"Okay," (Y/n) lightly grunted before the bed sunk just a little bit on his left side, indicating that she had moved onto the bed with him. He felt her fingers move his own fingers around, rubbing the knuckles lightly before shifting down the palm and wrist, moving his hand above his head as she did so. (Y/n) worked her way down his arm, pulling away before she touched his pectoral and switching to his other side, removing the arm over his eyes, "Keep your eyes closed, Osomatsu...you look really relaxed."

He only hummed his reply, feeling her move off of the bed when his right hand rested near his left.

"I'm going to place a warm washcloth over your eyes, so don't freak out."

"When did you become a masseuse?"

"Never," She laughed a little as the warm cloth was draped over his eyes, "I just pay attention to how you act when you come home from a job."

Osomatsu let out a sigh of contentment as the warmth soaked into his face, "I should start paying you to do this..."

"Oh, please don't. I'd feel bad."

He stuck his tongue out playfully, a small smile turning up his lips before withdrawing the wet organ. Something warm pressed against his sides, close to his waistline, before they started rubbing gentle circles into his

skin. The contact made him jump a little before Osomatsu melted into the massage.

"Side massages, (y/n)? Don't press too hard, I'm ticklish there."

"I know and I'll be careful," (Y/n)'s response was quiet as she shifted her hands slowly up to his chest, the small tension in his back alerting him that his shirt was being pulled up. Osomatsu resisted showing the knowing smile, slightly arching his back to allow the cloth to travel up his chest freely. Expecting her to move her fingers towards his pectorals, Osomatsu furrowed his brow slightly as (y/n) instead traveled back down to his sides.

His breath hitched when he felt the tips of her fingers dip into the waistband of his pajama bottoms, the cord that was supposed to be tied no longer keeping the article cinched around his waist. Osomatsu withheld any comment as he felt her tentatively explore the waistband of his boxer briefs, his groin heating up as her fingers tucked underneath the undergarment's waistband. He kept his body still, unsure if

this

was the surprise or not.

His answer swiftly came when (y/n) brushed her fingertips against the length of his swelling shaft, tenderly wrapping around it and urging the member to grow further as she cautiously pulled down the pajama bottom and boxer briefs in one motion.

"Unnh, (y/n)--" Osomatsu groaned lightly, lowering his right hand to reach for where he thought her head would be, becoming quickly confused when his hand refused to move any further than an inch off the bed. The surprise became very evident and a coy smile twisted his lips upwards, "Oh, you're trying something new, huh?"

"Surprise," (Y/n)'s voice was soft as she laughed a little, a small bit of confidence in her tone as she continued to pull down the garments until they rested midway on Osomatsu's thighs. He pressed the back of his head into the bed as he felt her hot breath on the now exposed member.

"Ooh...babe, don't force yourself to do anything you're not comfortable with."

"Says the man tied to the bed," She commented before Osomatsu bit down on a moan, feeling her tongue press against the side of his shaft before the tip was wrapped by a warm and wet heat.

Osomatsu's eyes nearly rolled into the back of his head, feeling her hand and mouth work against each other before she found her rhythm. (Y/n) had never attempted to give him a blowjob, but

damn

...a small part of him wondered where she practiced while the rest of his mind was lost in bliss.

The pace never picked up, but she slowly worked her way further down his length until her lips were pressed against the base. She tried working the entire length a few times before nearly gagging and taking a deep breath, releasing her grip from his member.

"Sweetheart, don't force yourself to do everything in one go," Osomatsu was panting from her work, most of him wanting to make her do it again.

"No, I think I got it..." She coughed before the wet warmth wrapped around his shaft once more. Osomatsu pulled harshly on the wrist restraints, frustrated that he couldn't help her move.

"B-babe...slower...!"

(Y/n) responded immediately, slowing her tempo down to a near crawl as her hand and mouth worked as a pair to stroke his entire length. Osomatsu groaned loudly, his waist raising a little to match her rhythm. He wasn't close yet, but the feeling had begun to build just as (y/n) licked his length dry, partially releasing him before he heard some clothes shuffling around.

He was about to ask what she was doing when he felt her mouth on his, locking his lips into a kiss as her hand stroked his length once more.

Osomatsu kissed her greedily, sucking on her bottom lip and nibbling it gently as (y/n) tried to take control of the kiss. A smile turned Osomatsu's lips upward, backing off his efforts to let her have the lead and was immediately rewarded with her tongue diving into his mouth, exploring it delicately before he pushed his tongue against hers.

A heated moan escaped her lips before a jolt shocked Osomatsu's nerves, his hardened shaft pressing against something wet and warm, the tip slipping into the entrance. Breaking the kiss, (y/n) pulled her head away before something soft was pressed against his open mouth, his tongue immediately finding a hardening nub and lightly teasing it. The soft cries from her were all the confirmation he needed to know that she had given him one of her breasts to play with.

With a small twitch of his waist, her entrance let him slide all the way in, (y/n) crying out louder as his teeth gently clamped down on the nipple in his mouth to keep her in place.

A pleased hum reverberated through his chest as he felt (y/n) start to move up and down along his length, riding him fully before he let her breast go.

"Fuck..." Osomatsu's voice was deep and gravelly, "Take what you want from me."

He felt her walls tighten around his length in response, her pace starting to go faster. Before long, she was mewling above him as he speared her over and over, the washcloth slipping off of his face and giving him a good look of his blushing girlfriend on top of him.

The flushed look of pleasure on (y/n)'s face was one he could get addicted to, knowing that

he

was the one that made her look like that. Her breasts bounced with the rhythm as both of her hands were splayed on his chest for balance, her hair tied back to stay out of her face.

Osomatsu lifted his waist up a little, seeing the change in her expression as she felt him fully hilt into her. The pace paused for just a moment before he took control of it, thrusting up into her as she simply let gravity do the work. He moaned as he felt the familiar build up of an orgasm, letting things take their course as (y/n) trembled above him, her slick walls clamped down harder around him as she cried out loud.

With a final push, Osomatsu braced himself as (y/n) partially collapsed on top of him, her core shuddering as his seed poured into her womb.

"(Y/n)...? Are you okay...?"

"Mmmnh, yeah," She groaned a little as she reached up and completely removed the washcloth from his face, giving him a soft smile, "How was the surprise?"

Osomatsu gave her a long kiss, pulling away after a few moments, "Wonderful. Though, I'm kinda curious as to why you wanted to try tying me to the bed."

"I wanted to be in charge, though I think you took over near the end," She moaned as she shifted off of him, Osomatsu's semi-hardened member still resting inside of her before she pulled it out, "Brain's kinda fuzzy..."

"Maybe I'll try this on you next time," He offered a smirk as she reached up and undid his bindings, kissing the side of her breast as she leaned over him.

"Well...it'll be another first for you to take."

"Hmm..." Osomatsu hummed before wrapping his arms around (y/n)'s waist, bringing her close after she released his feet, "I can't wait for that...but let's rest for the night. There may be a surprise for you in the morning."

"Will it include what I did to you?" (Y/n) glanced at him as Osomatsu pressed himself against her back, his arms tucking her waist against his as

his body created a big spoon against her. He kissed her cheek with a hum of indecisiveness.

"You'll just have to find out, sweetheart."

MastuNoir!Osomatsu x Reader, Part 5

Inspired by shimmering_clouds' prompt.

"Calm down, you're ruining the mood."

Osomatsu clicked his tongue before shoveling more fried rice into his mouth, barely raising a glare over the lip of his bowl. Two others joined him for the short break the officers were allowed, both of them just as irritated as him.

"You're the one that suggested this mission, Tou," The oldest sextuplet grunted after taking a swig of water from the glass on the table in front of him, watching the accused man barely flinch, "Didn't have the foresight to see how

long

this one would take?"

"Shut up," 'Tou' finished off his food and set the plate down on the table, leaning back into his chair while looking at the table's two occupants, "We have to be careful with this one. Any slip up sends everyone we know into destruction."

Osomatsu hummed in disgruntled agreement, discarding the now-empty plate onto the table, "You and Chooi didn't need to come with."

"And leave you to do this alone?" 'Chooi' questioned as he finished his meal, gently setting the plate down on top of Osomatsu's, "Someone's gotta keep an eye on you during the 'training'."

The eldest brother let out a resigned sigh through his nose, lowering his gaze down towards his left hand. He slowly clenched it into a fist before

relaxing the digits, fully closing his eyes as he silently agreed with his younger brothers. Choromatsu and Todomatsu -- 'Chooi' and 'Tou' -- had joined him on this reconnaissance mission to see how much information the police force had on the criminal families, using the opportunity to also hone their respective skills.

The mission was supposed to take up to two months, but ten weeks had come and gone, driving Osomatsu's patience out the window.

He wanted to go back home, to enjoy his personal comforts and fully relax in his own bed.

He wanted to hold you in his arms again.

"Don't worry," Todomatsu whispered in a low voice, "I'm almost finished."

Osomatsu let out an amused huff, knowing full well that the words were directed at him.

Todomatsu was never wrong about his technological skills, fully completing a memory wipe on both the site-based and off-site server computers that left the police scrambling to figure out what happened to their records of the criminal families within the city. He had also programmed any recovery attempt to trigger a power outage that blew the fuses within the police station's fuse box, forcing them to wait until an electric company could come and repair the entire thing.

The three of them were home before the police even realized what happened, the killcode triggering just after midnight.

"I've gotta update our database with this stuff," Todomatsu waved the stolen USB stick over his head, taking long strides towards the office he used on the second floor, "Take the next few days off to recover."

"Yes, boss," Choromatsu and Osomatsu responded playfully, each of them breaking off towards their own bedrooms.

The eldest undressed as fast as he could when the door closed behind him, tossing the stolen uniform to the other side of the room and stretching out every muscle he had, letting the cool air of the room hit his naked body before deciding to take a well-deserved shower. Osomatsu reveled in the warm water, standing still and just letting the water wash every stress and worry down the drain.

His mind wandered to the last time you were in the shower with him, smiling at the memory of you calling his name as he pressed you against the tiled wall, his chest against yours.

"Fuck, sweetheart..." Osomatsu let out a pleased moan while one of his hands wandered to his growing length, "Eleven weeks is too long without you..."

The eldest brother looked back at the duffel bag sitting open on his bed, recounting how many daily outfits he packed and how much more would need to fit. Some of his backup toiletries were there already, so he only needed to focus on the clothes. He packed the bathrobe you loved to wear, plus a rather scandalous outfit for your eyes only...if the mood ever came up.

"Knock, knock," A familiar voice called out before the bedroom door opened, Osomatsu glancing over his shoulder to see the second oldest brother tilt his head in curiosity, "Heading somewhere?"

"Yeah, for a few days. What's going on?"

"Nothing, just wanted to make sure that you were up and about since the other two have been awake for a few hours now," Karamatsu folded his arms across his chest, "Good job, by the way."

"Todomatsu did all the heavy lifting," Osomatsu laughed, zipping up the duffel bag and slinging it over his shoulder, "I was there for training."

"Yeah, but it was your idea to do it."

The oldest could only nod, a confident smirk resting on his lips.

"Heading to your 'vacation home'?"

"Yeah, message me if there's something that I need to be aware of," Osomatsu rested a hand on Karamatsu's shoulder as he passed his brother, leading the way down to the main entrance, "Oh, right. There's supposed to be something in the files Todomatsu grabbed that would interest you. Something about new weaponry?"

"Nice," Karamatsu huffed as he followed the oldest down the stairs, "Anything you want me to pass on to the others?"

"Nothing more than the usual."

"Fair enough. Have a restful vacation."

The trip to the apartment was uneventful, leaving Osomatsu standing outside your locked apartment door. He hummed as he took out a copy of your key (that you gave with permission), sliding the key home and unlocking the doorknob and deadbolt before swinging the door open.

"Hello? Anyone home?" He called out while he closed the door behind him, kicking off his shoes and placing the duffel bag on the ground, "Hello~"

Silence was the response, leaving him to hum thoughtfully as he took in the state of the apartment. You were never one for fully cleaning your apartment, always apologizing for the 'mess' whenever he came over unannounced. With it being a work day, Osomatsu had a few hours to burn until you came back home.

He rolled up his sleeves and began to clean up your morning mess, organizing the bathroom to include his things, and unpacked the duffel bag into the few empty drawers you kept in your dresser.

A heavy weight sat on your shoulders as you unlocked the door to your small apartment, letting your bag slide haphazardly off your arm while

leaning against the closed door with a strained moan.

"I didn't hear my name in that, so I'm guessing it was a rough day."

Your eyes snapped to the speaker, seeing Osomatsu standing in the hallway with a pair of sweatpants and a loose sleeveless shirt, "Osomatsu! You're back!"

He held his arms wide as you jumped into the offered hug, his hands immediately pressing you into him while your lips collided with a fiery passion. You could barely kick off your work shoes before he carried you to the couch, laying underneath you while his fingers teased the hem of your knee-length skirt.

"Sorry for taking so long, sweetheart," He gave a sincere apology, "Things happened beyond my control."

"There are things you

can't

control?" You teased, cheeks flushed a bright red.

"I'm only human, after all," Osomatsu smiled, gently resting his left hand against your cheek and pulling you down for another kiss. To hear you moan against his lips sent his body into overdrive, adjusting his hips to ensure that you

felt

him.

"I've missed you so much, Osomatsu," You spoke against his lips, a small hiccup drawing his attention as a tear fell to his cheek. He stilled his movements, mentally berating himself for rushing his desire. Sitting you back up, he adjusted his position to sit underneath you, pulling away and fully focusing on your needs.

"Hey, I'm here, sweetheart," He crooned, his hands holding both sides of your face and wiping away the sudden flow of tears, "Want to check me for wounds again?"

You shook your head in his hands, sight blurred by the salty tears, "No, I trust you...I just...I've had a really hard week and this was a complete surprise...!"

"Well, I'm here for a few days," Osomatsu kissed your forehead gently, his smile drawing one of your own, "Use me as you wish, okay?"

You pressed your lips against his for a long yet soft kiss, his lips licking the salty taste away. When you had calmed down, you gave him another hug.

"Can we...get food first? I haven't eaten since this morning..." You spoke into his shoulder, his arms holding you close.

"Of course, sweetheart," He picked you up and carried you over to your bedroom, "There'll be plenty of time to satisfy our sexual hunger later. Let's get you dressed to go out."

DenkiMystery!Osomatsu x Reader

Inspired by shimmering_clouds' prompt.

"You have to work the late shift again?" My hands dipped lower into the water-filled sink, the plates from dinner soaking as I looked towards my husband. He looked haggard with dark bags starting to form under his eyes, grabbing a set of keys from the small basket next to the front door.

"I'll be back home before you know it."

"You say that every time, Ozo," I stepped away from the sink, drying off my hands with the towel tucked into the waistline of my jeans, "Please...I'd like you home during the night, just like we used to enjoy when we were first wed."

The hurt was obvious in his eyes as he moved towards me, holding his arms wide as Ozo brought me into a hug. He raised a hand to rub against the back of my head before slightly pulling away, leaning in close to plant a kiss on my lips.

"I want that more than anything, (y/n)," Ozo rested his forehead against mine, his skin feeling hot and feverish, "However, if I want to make sure that we have a secure roof over our heads, I need to work the hours my boss set up for me."

"I know," I gave him a quick kiss on the lips before we pulled away from each other, "I just want to spend more time with you."

Ozo gave a small laugh with his eyes closed for a moment, "Let me see if I have some vacation, and take off what I can."

With a farewell wave, I watched my husband leave the small apartment we jointly paid for, moving back to the sink and finishing the dishes before moving onto the last nightly chore for myself.

It had become almost ritualistic for me. After he'd leave for work on his night shifts, I'd go through our apartment and clean up what I could without bothering our neighbors. Roll out the futon, fluff both of our pillows, and then take a bath to soak the day away.

Humming softly to myself, I began to pick up the various empty cans of coffee that Ozo drank throughout the day, putting them in a small bin before finding a journal haphazardly shoved behind Ozo's dresser. I could only stare at it before shaking my head.

I wasn't some blushing high school girl anymore. If my husband wanted to keep a journal that he didn't want me to know about, then that was his decision.

Rinsing out the cans and putting them in the recycling bag, I moved towards the bathroom and began to fill the tub with water, stripping down completely and washing myself off before sitting in the tub. The warm water wrapped around me like a liquid blanket, helping my tense muscles relax and coaxing my body to stretch out despite the tub's meager length.

The journal behind Ozo's dresser came back into mind, a small bead of curiosity growing in my gut as most of my brain disagreed at the thought of looking into it.

Maybe he was hiding some secret from me about our anniversary coming up.

It could've been his daily complaints about his job that Ozo couldn't talk to me about because I wouldn't understand most of what he was saying.

...maybe he was hiding a second life.

I sat up straight in the tub, spilling some water over the edge and shaking my head to clear away the nasty thought. Ozo was too busy to cheat on me, as most of his awake hours were spent here at home, drinking canned coffee or my homemade milk tea. There was no way he was cheating on me

...right?

I pulled the drain plug and let the tub empty itself, grabbing a towel and pressing it to my head while making my way back to the bedroom Ozo and I shared. Quickly drying off and slipping into my pajamas, I roughly dried my hair with the towel, sitting cross-legged on the futon with my back facing Ozo's dresser.

I didn't need to look. If it was something he needed me to know, then Ozo would've told-- Gritting my teeth, I turned around and reached for the journal, pulling it out and opening to the first page.

'I'm losing myself more and more each day. It's getting harder to hide, but I think I've managed to keep (y/n) in the dark.'

My heart plummeted, reading and re-reading the handwritten sentence that was definitely in Ozo's scrawling. There was nothing else on the page, just the one ambiguous sentence that could've meant anything. I turned to the next page

'(Y/n)'s fertility test came back positive, but mine...it's as I feared. My body has changed so much that I can't give her what she wants most from me...I really am a piece of shit.'

I clamped a hand over my mouth, realizing that Ozo's had this journal for

years

. The fertility test was done about a year after our vows were exchanged, when I had concerns about us not being able to have a baby ever since I had an event of extreme abdominal pain followed by intense bleeding. The doctor had guessed that there was an embryo planted within my womb, but something had changed in it and caused my body to attack it as if I had an autoimmune disorder. My uterus no longer bore the scar, but it was still fresh in both of our minds.

With a shaking hand, I kept turning through the pages.

'I've started working longer night shifts in order to hide from (y/n). If she finds out...I couldn't bear to see her disappointed face.'

One more page...

'(Y/n) picked up a night job recently, starting to work while I was driving around town. She quit just yesterday because of a 'customer complaint', but she couldn't tell me what it was. I enjoyed seeing her smile whenever I drove by the store...I hope she can find something that brings her just as much joy in her new job.'

There were a few blank pages before the next entry.

'It's getting worse. I want to confess to (y/n), but I know that she'll leave me. Hell, I would run from me if I was in her shoes.'

I slammed the journal shut, covering my eyes with the sleeve of my pajamas to keep my tears from falling onto the paper and revealing that I'd seen it. The man I had sworn to love and support for as long as I lived...all of the signs pointed to cheating, despite him not explicitly writing it.

Standing up from the freshly made futon, I grabbed my haori and put it on over the pajamas. I knew where his frequent stopping place was, and I was going to ask him some questions.

The night air was humid, but not humid enough to smother my lungs. I held the journal in my left hand tightly as I walked with a purpose towards a cafe called 'New York', knowing that Ozo frequented the place when he was between clients. Turning the street corner across from the cafe, I realized that his taxi wasn't among the scattering of cars parked along the road.

It was possible that he had a client to drive, and there was always the chance of someone just drifting through in this small town.

Noticing that the cafe was empty except for the manager, I quickly ducked into the lobby as the door announced my arrival with a small chime.

"Welcome," The man behind the counter called out, partially turning around to glance over his shoulder, "I'll be...oh, (y/n). You're out and about late tonight."

"Evening, Takashi," A look around confirmed that there was no one else in the cafe, "I was looking for my husband, and was hoping to catch him here."

I didn't miss the uncharacteristic flinch in Takashi's shoulders or the strained smile that replaced the honest one on his face.

"Ah, Ozo..." He laughed a little, "He hasn't been here yet, so he may still be out on the road. You know how far he has to go sometimes..."

I dropped the curious look on my face, staring right into Takashi's eyes while my face set into a neutral position. The man grew more tense and tried to look away without being obvious.

"Please, just tell me if you know where he is," I sighed, "I really need to speak with him about...a private matter."

"Listen, (y/n)," Takashi raised a hand to the back of his neck, rubbing it lightly before looking back at me, "He hasn't stopped in tonight, but if you're worried about him then you're welcome to check the state park just down the road. Ozo stated that he likes to stop there when I'm too busy to serve him."

"All right...I'll check there," I thanked him and left the cafe, turning towards the small nature reserve that was located just down the road. As I grew closer to the park, the humidity dropped away and a chill began to fill the air, making me clutch the haori around me tighter, tucking the journal underneath my left arm.

The parking lot was closed, but I spotted a taxi parked across the road.

Getting closer to the uniformed vehicle, I recognized the hanging ornament dangling from the rearview mirror -- a small pouch with a pine bush painted on its front. It was a gift that I gave him on our first anniversary, the pouch filled with cinnamon and nutmeg that was powerful enough to cancel out the second-hand smoke odor in the taxi, but not strong enough to overpower the nose.

A small smile crossed my face at the memory before I heard a groan from within the nearby treeline of the park, looking over to see if I could spot anything unusual.

Another grunting noise drew me closer, the sound drawing an unpleasant image in my mind of Ozo with--

I shook my head to get rid of the image. My husband sounded like he was in pain and I was the closest person to help him.

"Ozo...?" His name left my lips as tears threatened to fall from my eyes, hearing another groan that sounded familiar, something more sexual.

Don't go. It's better to feign ignorance than to be hurt by the truth,

a voice whispered in my head.

I'd rather know the truth and move on, especially if it involves the man I love,

I countered that line of thinking as I pushed through the treeline, walking as quietly as I could until I saw a white shirt in the moonlight. The person's back was high in the air, rocking back and forth as if they were crawling.

My heart leapt into my throat, recognizing the position the person was in. I couldn't see whoever was underneath them.

Holding my breath, I moved forward against my inner voice's wishes and continued until I saw my husband alone, crouched against the ground with his legs supporting his weight in a kneeling position. His arms were tucked across his chest as if he was struggling to free his neck from something while two long horns curled upwards from his forehead.

I dropped the journal, staring at my disfigured husband in shock as the book landed hard on the ground, drawing his attention to my presence.

Ozo stilled when he saw me. His eyes were wide with narrowed irises, tears streaming down his face as the horns protruded

through

his skin, partially hidden by his bangs. His forearms and hands were discolored, with long nails sprouting from the tips of his fingers.

Without warning, Ozo bolted up and charged deeper into the treeline away from me.

Without a second thought, I chased after him.

"Ozo, wait!" My voice sounded strangled, the haori flowing behind me as I mustered up the strength from my track days of high school, my stride growing longer as I was barely able to keep up with him. My husband said nothing in reply, dodging around trees that I couldn't see until I almost hit them.

The ground's angle gave way to a rolling hill, realization striking me as my foot went down further than I anticipated. Swallowing a yell, my right ankle twisted to the side and my momentum sent me sprawling until the hill evened out. I lay still for a moment before trying to move, feeling the bruising welts developing on my arms and legs. Scrambling back up to my feet and taking a step forward, my right ankle gave way and I fell back to the ground, pain flooding my mind as reality sank in.

I was alone with possibly a broken ankle, my husband was some kind of monster, and I didn't have a phone on me to call for help.

"Dammit..." I clenched my fists, gathering blades of grass in each one as frustration filled my mind. I don't know how much time passed before I was able to think clearly again, slowly testing the ankle to see if it was actually broken.

A familiar twinge ripped through my nerves, making me think that I had torn some of the muscle.

I swallowed a laugh. The same injury that ended my track season had emerged with a vengeance.

Pushing myself up into a crawling position, I looked for a sturdy tree and moved towards it, using the trunk and branches to pull myself up back into a standing position.

My injury can suck it, I have to find my husband.

"Ozo, where are you?" I called out into the nearby woods, staying still until I heard a noise, "Ozo!"

Taking a breath, I began limping my way over towards a rough direction of where I thought I had last seen him, hopping on one foot when I was able and carefully making my way through the rougher terrain. I continued until I saw a humanoid figure kneeling near a large outcropping of rocks, the formation almost making a cave.

"Ozo...?"

The figure flinched and scrambled back against the rocks, acting like it had been cornered by a ruthless hunter. The moonlight revealed the reddish horns protruding from the figure, the white shirt partially torn open and revealing skin underneath.

I hobbled to a standstill, unsure of how to continue. If he fled again, I'd lose him for sure with my torn muscle. If he fled...I didn't know if he'd ever come home.

"Ozo," I gently called out his name, "I'm sorry."

"...what...?" Ozo's voice sounded gravelly, like his throat was sore from screaming.

"I'm sorry," I repeated, reaching out a hand to hold onto a nearby tree for balance, "I'm sorry that you...that I wasn't someone you could talk to about this."

"I'm a monster, (y/n)...why would I tell you?"

"Because I love you and we swore to each other that we'd be there for each other through sickness and health," I hobbled forward, cautiously making

my way towards him, "This isn't as bad as my initial thought when I found your journal."

"You...looked through it?" Ozo raised his head a little, the tone of his voice lifting up in a question, "...but I thought I hid it..."

"You did throughout our marriage, but not last night. I'm not mad, Oz--" Gravity cut off my sentence as I stumbled on a hidden rock, crying out as I fell sideways. Clenching my teeth in pain, I looked back towards Ozo like my fall didn't happen, "I'm not mad or scared of you, Ozo. I married you because I love

all

of you, even the secrets you didn't want me to know about."

Ozo remained silent but his position had slightly shifted since I fell, his left arm partially outstretched like he wanted to help me but unsure of how I'd react.

I took the initiative and dragged myself closer to him, letting the bum ankle drag behind me as I moved. When he was within reach, I held out my left hand to him and lightly rested it against his knee. From my closer position, I could see what Ozo wanted to hide from me.

Two large fangs extended upwards from under his bottom lip, curling slightly out just like a traditional oni mask. Rough red patches marred the skin underneath his eyes, and his pupils looked like they had been completely slashed through the middle by a bright glowing red line. It was almost beautiful to look at. The skin under my hand felt warm to the touch, like he had been out in the sun all day.

"Ozo," I started before he looked away.

"Don't. I know I'm a monster," Despite the harsh tone of his voice, he didn't move from my touch, "You don't need to placate me with lies."

"When did I lie to you?" I moved closer, struggling to get up into a kneeling position and moving my injured ankle underneath me, "Ozo, when have I

ever

lied to you about anything?"

Ozo lowered his eyes and tried to turn his head away but I caught his cheeks in my hands, pulling him to look back at me.

"When?"

"Never..." He slowly responded, looking down from my gaze.

"...why can't you look at me?" I tried to bend down to reconnect with Ozo's mixed hues, frowning when he pulled his head away from my hands.

"Because I know what I look like to you," Ozo leaned back, pressing himself more onto the rock formation and away from me, "I'm a monster and no one can love what I am."

"Ozo," I bit down a yelp as I moved closer, my ankle rubbing against a rock, "I don't think that a woman who's afraid would have chased you through the park at night, agonizing an old wound, and

still

continued to look for you."

"'Old wound'?" The words caught Ozo's ear, making him look back at me before shifting his gaze down towards the injured ankle, "(Y/n)--"

"Did you still want me to prove that I'm not afraid of you?" I intercepted his stare by ducking my head down into his view, holding it as I continued, "Then tell me what to do."

"I--" Ozo looked away, uncertainty washing over his face as he pressed a hand against it. His eyes were full of fear and worry.

Without saying anything, I leaned forward and wrapped my arms around his shoulders, feeling him slightly flinch at the physical contact. He felt hot to the touch, but I held on. I felt him take a deep breath before his arms wrapped around me, his face burying itself against my shoulder as a sob ripped through his body.

The quiet area was filled with the sound of my husband crying into my shoulder, his fingers gripping the back of my haori tightly like it was a lifeline from drowning. I held him close, moving a hand to rest on the back of his head.

He slowly ran out of tears, taking in shaky breaths as he let his emotions go. I leaned my head against his, letting his mind calm down before doing or saying anything that would shatter the peace he needed. With a small squeeze, he pulled away before bringing his face close to mine, pressing our lips together in a needy kiss. I returned the gesture as I felt his hands pull me down underneath him, a trail of kisses leading from my mouth to my neck as his teeth nibbled against a soft spot. His fingers dug into the haori, snagging the neckline of my pajama top and pulling to reveal my left shoulder.

"Ozo..." I breathed out, "This probably isn't the best place..."

My words seemed to snap him out of what he was doing, his eyes sharpening in recognition and swiftly pulling me up from the ground into his arms, his crossed legs serving as my seat.

"Sorry...I was so relieved that it just felt

right

," He muttered as his forehead rested against my exposed shoulder. He continued as I ran a hand through his hair, "The journal...you're right, I should've told you but I was so worried that I'd lose you...I never wanted you to find out."

"Ozo," I lightly gave one of his horns a kiss, "

These

don't change the fact that you're my husband and I'd much rather have a monster as a husband than a cheater."

"Cheater?" He tilted his head up a little, meeting my hues from underneath his dark bangs.

"The way you were writing about this made it seem more like you were hiding a girlfriend from me," I moved my hand from his head to underneath his bangs, pushing them up so we saw eye to eye, "You didn't say it explicitly, but it was what I first thought."

An amused look crossed his face before he kissed my cheek, his fangs rubbing against my skin, "I have a feeling that if I

was

cheating, you'd be much less forgiving than this."

"Oh yeah," I leaned into the kiss, lightly pressing my index finger against the tip of his nose when he pulled away, "Much less of the chasing out of worry and more of the 'I'm going to kill you' chase. I'd find a way to use the journal as a weapon."

Using the same finger, I pressed it against my chin in thought, "Probably make you suffer the 'death by a thousand papercuts'."

"Oh, please have mercy," Ozo laughed in a mocking voice, "That's the

worst

kind of death."

We laughed for a little before silence took over, both of us just staring at each other before Ozo spoke.

"I'm not cheating on you."

"Well, you better

not

be after everything I've been through tonight," I rocked against his chest, smiling over at him, "So...no more 'late night shifts'?"

He huffed a laugh, his smile widening before standing up effortlessly with me in his arms, "Not unless the boss actually gave them to me."

Ozo slightly adjusted his grip before walking through the darkness, his footing sure as if he could see more clearly than I'd ever be able to. I took a small breath before speaking again.

"Ozo?"

"Hmm?" He looked down at me with his split hues, the smile still on his face.

"I love you," I leaned up and gave him a light kiss on his lips, feeling his arm curl more underneath me as he held me there to return the kiss.

Dragon!Osomatsu x Reader

A monstrous roar tore through the dark skies, startling me from my sleep as I threw the lambskin blanket off of my body, quickly looking into the night through the partially covered window. Streaks of light shot from deep within the nearby woods, arching up and colliding with a large winged form before fading. I held my breath as I heard faint shouts in the distance, clasping my hands together in prayer as I imagined my father among the throng of soldiers, drafted into hunting down a terrifying dragon that had leveled towns and cities.

We were farmers -- mere field workers whose only job was to ensure that the town was supplied with enough harvest -- but when my father was practically pulled from the fields to help on this dragon hunt...

I shut my eyes tightly as I felt them flood with tears.

He

wasn't

a soldier.

The noises in the woods quieted, leaving a hollow silence as the night chorus of insects slowly started singing again, determining that there wasn't any kind of threat to them. Worry stirred in my gut as I pulled on a decent enough outfit before lighting a small torch, the flames slowly coming to life around the fat-soaked rags. Closing the wooden door behind me, I took in a breath and headed into the woods where I had previously heard the noises.

If there were wounded soldiers, then it would be best to offer them a place to eat and rest.

I forged deeper into the woods, losing all light from the night sky underneath the trees and struggling to see in the flickering light of the torch. A metallic glint caught the fire near the ground, drawing my attention as I

recognized a partially burnt set of armor scattered along the ground. Scorch marks licked up the front of the chestpiece and the helmet was nowhere to be found.

Waving the torch around the area, I sucked in a sharp breath as I saw the limp form of a man in tattered clothing near the armor. His dark hair was short, the red uniform shirt that marked his rank as a scout was heavily damaged, but I could see his chest rising and falling with each breath he took while face-first on the ground. I looked around the area, but couldn't see anyone else.

Gently pulling the man's right arm up and around my shoulders, I held onto him and slowly dragged him back home to lay in my father's bed, taking a large canvas back to the woods and gathering the man's armor. I had to brush out a lot of ash from the larger pieces, but didn't mess around with them too much. The man could take care of the intensive cleaning when he was more awake.

Lighting a few candles in the bedroom, I carefully looked over the unconscious man's body to see that, beyond the scratches and bruises, he was fine. Filling a soaking bowl with water from the well outside, I left it by his bedside after toweling off his forehead with a damp cloth. He flinched a little, but didn't make any other movement.

It was a few days before the man woke up from his sleep, announcing it with a scream that made me drop the clay cup in my hands and rush into the bedroom.

"What in the hell?!" He shouted as he looked over himself, his fingers tugging at the hair over his ears before trying to reach the center of his back.

"Easy," I tried to sound calm, "I found you in the woods behind my house."

"Wha--" His dark eyes looked over at me, wide with surprise at first before a partially amused look crossed his face, "

Your

house...?"

"Well, my father owns it," Moving towards the water bowl next to the bed, I dipped the cloth back into the cool water and lifted it up to him after a partial squeeze, allowing him to take it, "With him currently drafted into the army, I guess it's my house."

"Army, huh?" The man swiped the cloth along the back of his neck while he looked around the room, his eyes settling on his own set of armor, "Ah...yeah. I guess they have become more desperate."

"I've got a spare set of clothes that you can borrow while I mend the ones you're wearing," I pulled open the lid of the clothes chest near the door, pushing through the piles until I found a suitable shirt and pants, "It's not the fancy clothes you're used to wearing in the capital, but it's the best a farmer's daughter can offer on such short notice."

The man simply stared at the clothes in my hands, taking a moment before reaching out to take them from me. He dropped the wet rag into the bowl and started to take off the red shirt.

"I'll wait outside--!" I quickly turned around and left the bedroom, sitting at the small table near the cooking area with my hands over my face.

He must've been some kind of nobleman who was used to undressing in front of the maids and such. I waited until I heard his footsteps come closer before looking over, seeing the red shirt and beige pants draped over his arm. The man was inspecting everything as he walked towards me, not meeting my eyes as I took the clothes from him.

"Small home."

"It's what my great-grandfather built for his family," I tried to mentally push past the rude commentary. I knew it was small, only able to house three people comfortably, "Were you hungry at all?"

"Yeah, I could eat," He huffed as he leaned out the front doorway, looking around outside, "What do you have?"

Setting the clothes down on my seat, I headed towards the salting rack and pried open the cover.

"There's some meat jerky I have left. There's also the veggies from the garden, and some eggs that I picked this morning," I mentally went through the checklist. If he wanted something akin to whatever he had before, then I'd have to scrounge up enough money to go to the market...

"That's fine with me," The man pulled himself back in and sat down on the empty chair heavily, eyeing the pile of clothes before moving his gaze towards me, "What's your name?"

"(Y/n) Blainbriar, sir...last in the line."

"Blainbriar, huh? Why is that name familiar...?" He put a hand against his chin.

"Robert Blainbriar is my father," I pulled the meat from the salting rack and gathered the few eggs from the morning, tossing some wood into the stove and patiently coaxing the flame back to life.

"Ah, yeah! He made a pretty good meal," The man sighed in satisfaction.

"Well, if you thought that his food was good, then you're going to be amazed by what I can do," I laughed a little, remembering how my father would always try new dishes for us to eat but never really got them nailed down.

"Who can say for sure," The chair squeaked across the floor, "I can't wait to see what kind of meal you'll make."

"It's certainly not what you're used to back in the capital," My eyes partially closed, "I'm afraid that with my food, I'd be kicked out of the kitchens and sent to the stocks for a few days."

"The capital is full of idiots and brown-noses," He huffed from a different part of the room, "Ah, something broke here."

I looked over to see him kneeling down by the clay cup I dropped earlier.

"Your scream scared me," I set a hefty iron skillet on the stove, wiping my hands off on the apron I had donned before kneeling in front of him and carefully picking up each piece, "I'll have to make another one."

"You

made

that?" The man raised an eyebrow as he watched me, standing up shortly after I did.

"Yeah," Nodding a little, I tossed the clay outside before going back to the stove and grabbing a wooden paddle from the hanging rack, "While the capital has the metals they need for anything, we have to make do with what the earth provides."

The man hummed a little before sitting back down at the table. He continued to be silent as I served the food and drink, using a small bowl as a substitute for my broken cup. We were quiet through the meal, only the sounds from outside disrupting the silence.

The man's name was Osomatsu, the last heir in a long line of royalty that dated back further than the kingdom's line. His family was small, only consisting of himself and a younger brother who were waited on by servants throughout the day.

I didn't ask why Osomatsu was wearing the red color of the capital's scouts.

While I was busy with the daily chores around the farm, he would always remain close by, watching what I was doing with such interest that I could only guess that he'd never seen this kind of work up close. Osomatsu seemed disgusted when I had asked if he wanted to help out with feeding the chickens, turning up his nose and moving back towards the house but never actually going inside.

Another day passed of silent meals and attempted conversations, Osomatsu becoming more and more reserved as the day dragged on. With the food

stores running low, I started to gather up what produce I had and began to load up the hauling cart.

"What are you doing?" The prince asked, taking a wide walk around the cart as I loaded the last of the barley grain bags.

"I'm...getting everything ready to head to the market in the early morning," I straightened out my back and felt a small pop as my spine settled into position.

"You need to go to the market for something?"

"If I'm to keep food on the table, then yes," I tried to give him a partial smile, "A trip to the market once or twice every few weeks normally, but we've had such a rough year so far that I don't have much to offer the market. The road taxes have been growing to a point where I may not be able to afford going to the market..."

"People are charging you to use the road?" Osomatsu raised an eyebrow.

"Sadly, yes."

"That seems--" A thoughtful look passed over his face before looking back at me, "--really dumb."

"Don't let the collectors hear you say that," I laughed a little, "Though, I'm sure they'd just ignore you, with your noble rank and all."

I started pushing the cart into the stall I had cleared out for it, grunting as the dirt underneath my feet gave way as the wheeled thing moved backwards. The payload wasn't heavy, but the cart was crafted from solid wood that gave it enough heft to make it a pain to start pushing.

"Would...I be able to come with you tomorrow?" Osomatsu rested a hand against the door frame as he leaned on it. I paused after throwing a large hide covering over the cart to keep the insects from devouring the goods, glancing over my shoulder to look at the prince.

"If you'd like," I gave him a small smile, "I usually leave early in the morning, but there's no pressure if you wake up too late."

"That should be fine."

"What happened to your horse?"

Osomatsu lounged on the seat as I hauled the cart off of the property, pushing the cart arm forward down the dusty road towards the nearby village market. He was awake before I was, rubbing his thumb over my handiwork on his damaged clothes with a soft look on his face. When he realized I was looking at him from my bedroom doorway, his face had hardened once more before leaving the house entirely.

I had found him sitting on the cart, waiting for me.

"Father took him when he was drafted into the army and the donkey that was left had passed away a few days later," I uttered from the front, "I've had to do everything by hand."

"That sounds more tedious than it needs to be," He huffed as he crossed his arms behind his head.

"That's what farming is. We need to till the ground and work to ensure that everyone can survive," I spared a glance behind me, "Even the kingdom couldn't survive without food."

Osomatsu remained quiet for a few more moments before looking over at me.

"Have you had any dragon problems?"

"Dragons?" I raised an eyebrow, wiping the sweat off my forehead with a sleeve, "No...we've heard reports that the next village over had been hit a few times by a giant red dragon, but ever since most of the men were drafted, it's been quiet on that kind of news."

Osomatsu snuck a finger underneath his bangs and twirled around some sections of hair, his lips tightening into a cautious look. His hand raised to rest above his left ear, the fingertips digging into the mass of hair.

"What...do you think of dragons?"

"Well," I started, adjusting both hands on the push bar, "I think that just like any other creature, dragons are slightly misunderstood. They're terrifying when they're mad or when they decide to storm a village or town for our resources, but I think humans are just as bad."

I sucked in a breath, realizing who I was talking to.

"I didn't mean that in a really bad way!" I shook my head and kept facing forward, not wanting to see the angered look on Osomatsu's face, "It's just that I think it's the same with people. There are good ones and bad ones..."

The cart squeaked in the silence.

"I like you."

Three simple words shattered the silence of the trip, causing me to look back towards him in shock.

"I...what?"

"I. Like. You," He emphasized each word while giving me a smile, "You don't seem quick to judge people and you have a good head on your shoulders. I'm sure that if you were born into royalty, that kind of thinking would've been beaten out of your personality and I probably would've found you to be just as insufferable as the other princesses out there."

"Have you...had problems with courting?"

"Not really," Osomatsu seemed to have a smug look on his face before it fell into distrustful confusion, "...who are they?"

I turned to face whatever Osomatsu was looking at, worry growing in my stomach as a few carts were stopped ahead of us to enter through the toll

gate.

It was a wooden structure that was built to outlast the weather, giving the men inside a place to take shelter while waiting for passersby. A handful of men wore thick leathers with weapons strapped to their sides and back while looking over the carts that drove through.

"The tax collectors..." I reached towards the coin purse tied to my belt, pulling out a few gold coins before extending them towards one of the men that came close to my cart. He snatched the payment from me and gave a long look towards Osomatsu before eyeing the produce underneath the covering. With a grunt, I was waved through while one of the other men gave a low whistle.

I bit my lower lip and pushed the cart faster, not wanting to stay in the market for longer than I needed to.

"Are they always there?"

"Yeah...all morning, noon, and night," I barely spared a glance backwards as the toll gate faded into the distance, "They charge three gold each way. I'll barely be able to make any kind of living off of this load..."

I heard Osomatsu mutter something underneath his breath, but couldn't figure out what he said. With the market coming closer with each step, the road began to grow cluttered with people walking towards their destination while the carts and wagons pushed forward.

The market itself was a large field, lined with several pathways that had been carved into the ground by feet and wheels over the many years. Vendors took up spots next to the pathways and were calling out their prices or what they accepted as barter while customers called out counterprices for what they thought were expensive wares. My cart was much smaller compared to the other vendors, who had a few wagons full of supplies and goods that were parked close to each other, getting knocked about by pushy customers as I tried to find a small open spot.

Apologizing to Osomatsu many times over, I finally found a place that was just wide enough to park my cart on the outskirts of the market, far enough from the busy crowds to not get caught up in the ruckus while still being in their line of sight.

With a breath of relief, I hauled the cart into the spot and took a small moment to rub my hands together, trying to get the numbing sensation out of my digits. There was a small line of trees nearby that people were sitting underneath, pulling out a small sitting cushion from underneath the bench Osomatsu was sitting on and holding it out to him.

"There's a place to sit more comfortably there," I explained when he merely raised an eyebrow, "I'm not sure how long this will take, but I don't want you to be sun-touched by the end of it."

"Sun-touched?" He took the cushion cautiously.

"When your skin grows red and starts to blister," I looked over at the array of people, seeing many farming folk with their darker skin while the redder skin of the sun-touched people stood out in the crowd, "It can be quite painful if you're not used to it."

"No need to worry about that," Osomatsu shrugged and put the cushion back underneath the bench, "The sun doesn't affect me like that."

"If you're sure," I started to pull back the covering on the cart, revealing my few goods to the onlooking crowd. There were some who seemed interested, but no one stopped by my cart as I called out what goods I had and what I was looking for.

The sun began to rise higher into the sky as the crowds grew larger, a few people trying to barter me out of a profit. I had to make at least three gold in order to get home, but I was only able to collect half of that by the time lunch came around.

"Where are you going?" Osomatsu asked as I started putting in some of my goods into a smaller bag, leaning forward a little in interest.

"I'm going to get us something to eat," I wiped off my brow against the short sleeve of my dress, "Since I'm running low on coins, I'm going to try and barter with what I have."

"Want me to come with you?"

"No, I need you to stay here and guard the cart. Don't let anyone take anything without paying for it," I looked up at him, "Have you been hearing my prices?"

"Yeah, you've been shouting them all day."

"Well, that's what I need from them if they're interested," I gave a small wave before walking into the tide of people, "I'll be back with food."

"I wouldn't even raid this crap..." Osomatsu groaned as he watched (y/n) meld into the flow of customers, shifting his gaze from her to the goods on her cart. He had seen what happens when a farm can't survive, knowing that (y/n)'s puny farm was doomed to fail even if she did everything she could to save it. It's probably what made her father abandon it and leave his daughter to reap what the selfish bastard had sown.

His eyes narrowed at the thought. Fathers giving up their daughters for sacrifices, calling it an 'honor' for the unknowing child to be groomed and taught that it was 'for the village's survival'.

"Excuse me, are these for sale?" A man pointed towards one of (y/n)'s crafted clay dining sets, each piece wrapped carefully in cheesecloth to prevent them from breaking during transportation.

"Fifteen silver for the set, three silver for each individual piece," Osomatsu parroted what he heard (y/n) say throughout that morning. It was a pretty decent price for a handmade six-piece set: two cups, two sets of different sized plates, and two trays that were made to carry relatively a lot of weight.

"That's too expensive," The man scoffed, picking up one of the cups and turning it in his hands, "The clay isn't refined enough to warrant that kind of

price. You must be scalping me."

Osomatsu held back a sneer, leaning forward from his perch on the back of the cart, "It's the only price I'll accept. These were lovingly made by a poor farm girl in hopes of saving her father's livelihood, wrapped up so they'd be safely transported for

generous people like you

."

The words left his lips with a hint of magic, the man's face turning from a sneer to an understanding look as Osomatsu smiled a little.

"Ah...I see," The man reached into his coin sack and pulled out fifteen silver pieces before handing them to Osomatsu, "Here you are and tell the girl 'good luck'."

"Of course," Osomatsu fisted the coins and lounged back with a wide smirk on his face.

These humans were going to be fun to mess with.

The afternoon rush gave way to a lighter late afternoon crowd, most of the people having already bought what they needed from earlier in the day. The things that I had brought with me only counted for buying a few loaves of bread and a small jar of butter. I didn't know how I was going to explain to Osomatsu that I had barely made enough to get us lunch, my dusty and aching feet carrying me towards my cart.

I stood still when I saw that the cart was empty

. Completely empty.

No goods, no coins...no Osomatsu.

Everything that I had poured my blood, sweat, and tears over was gone. I tightened my grip on the bread, setting the paper-wrapped items down on the bench and tucking the butter jar underneath it for shade, fighting down the urge to cry as my hands held onto the push bar.

The wheels creaked as I pulled it away from the market, heading towards the road back home as my head filled with thoughts of what could've happened.

It was entirely possible that Osomatsu was found by his entourage and whisked off to his home, since he was a nobleman that was missing. He could've just wandered off after growing bored of watching the cart, leaving the goods to be stolen.

The cart was lighter without him lounging on the seat.

"Halt!" A strong, commanding voice startled me out of my thoughts, looking around before my eyes fell onto a small unit of the kingdom's soldiers. The one that called out to me was on horseback, glaring down at me from underneath his dark hair.

"...yes...? How can I assist you...?" I found myself leaning away from him as he moved his horse closer to me, the large black beast bred for war towering over me.

"You were seen passing earlier this way with a man," The armored man spoke without breaking eye contact, "Yet your cart is empty. Where is he?"

"Nobleman Osomatsu...? I'm not sure. I was accompanied by him to the market nearby, but he left without notice," I tried to keep my voice in an even tone.

"Take her," The man called out before two other men came from his other side, pulling the cart away from me and bringing my arms in front of my chest.

"No...stop!" I cried as two thick wooden blocks clamped down around my wrists, "I'm not a criminal!"

"For aiding a creature such as a dragon, you're guilty," The man on horseback spoke calmly as the horse pulled away from me, "Your sentence will be determined at the capital."

"No, please! I need to get back to tend to my farm!"

A rope was tethered to the back of the horse's saddle and tied around one of the locks on the top wooden block.

"Your farm is currently under investigation and is considered the capital's property until your release," The man glared back at me, his full eyebrows pinned into an angry look, "If you give me any trouble, your sentence will be extended."

Without a further word, he urged his horse forward and I had to keep up with its pace or be dragged along the ground like some criminal.

Osomatsu grinned to himself as he rode the hot air currents, high above the clouds where no mortal could see him from the ground. The feeling that he had longed for while staying at (y/n)'s home was an age-old comfort, letting the wind caress the skin between the fingers of each wing, the sunlight warming the red scales that gleamed like fresh blood. Powerful wingbeats carried his hefty form away from the market and towards his roost in the mountains, the miniscule coin bag tucked underneath his long tongue.

The money he'd gathered from the sold goods wasn't enough for him...nothing was ever enough for him. Osomatsu just wanted to head back to his mountain, take some coins from his collection and give it back to (y/n) as a parting gift. Let her go back to her failing home alone while he took off as a free dragon, no longer kept by her side by that annoying life debt. It was a simple task that wouldn't have taken him more than a few hours and he'd catch up to her before she even made it back to that damned toll gate.

His orange eyes caught something bright moving around underneath him, drawing his attention downward as he recognized the measly farm that (y/n)

called home. There were a few humans walking around the area, his enhanced vision revealing them to be the kingdom's soldiers. A growl rolled from his chest to his throat, shifting his focus back towards his destination.

Another glint from underneath him caught his eye again, looking back down to see a black smoke starting to curl upwards from the farm.

A heat grew in his belly as his wings snapped in close to his body, Osomatsu's tail directing him downwards into a nosedive, plummeting towards the soldiers that were pillaging the farm. He knew he'd be blamed for it, just by having a similar affinity to fire, but he wasn't going to let this stupid debt grow any bigger.

Osomatsu's massive jaws opened in a thunderous roar as he closed in on the small group of soldiers, spreading his wings wide to keep himself from careening into the ground before spewing out thick liquid that clung to anything it landed on. The liquid ignited everything it touched, sending the soldiers running in every direction while screaming in panic. Flapping his wings hard against the ground, Osomatsu extinguished the fire eating away at the house and shed while sending the soldiers toppling over, leaping over to one of them and pinning the silver-plated soldier underneath his left claws.

Not needing the rest alive, he sprayed them with the liquid fire again, growling in satisfaction as they burned alive before fully facing the cowering soldier underneath his left talons.

"Why were you here?" The coin purse underneath his tongue made it interesting to talk with, but his words were clear enough. The soldier didn't need to talk, his words coming out as incoherent screams of fear and babblings anyway, but his mind was easy to read.

That annoying commander had followed his trail from the fight to (y/n)'s house, gathering another hunting party under his banner and striking out again. The orders the soldier was given were to look for any traces of Osomatsu and to wipe out where he had stayed from the face of the earth. The girl would be dealt with at the capital.

Osomatsu growled as he put his full weight onto the soldier, killing him instantly as the dragon used the forward momentum for a running take-off, his large wings carrying him high into the sky once more.

He knew the commander well, knew how twisted the monster in human skin could be.

Karamatsu, the knight that had taken upon himself the extinction of all dragonkind throughout the kingdom. The man had somehow convinced himself that he was the savior of humanity, using humans and monsters alike to gain ranks in the military while tossing them aside after they were used up, like a child discarding his broken toys.

Osomatsu understood that he was heading into a trap, but he could only hope that he'd arrive before the trap was fully set with (y/n) as bait.

As the sun sank beneath the horizon, his keen eyesight caught the kingdom's banner flying by a gathering of tents, fighting against the temptation to torch the encampment and be done with it.

Knowing the monster called Karamatsu, it was full of unsuspecting humans that would be used as an example to further Osomatsu's fear in the kingdom, and give the annoying commander more power to take him down.

Staying at his altitude, Osomatsu spotted a smaller gathering of tents off of the main road without a banner. Glaring at the smaller encampment, Osomatsu pulled out the coin bag and shifted mid-flight, falling to the earth in a mostly-human form while leaving his wings to slow his descent before his feet touched the ground.

Using the cover of darkness, he stayed low to the ground and made his way towards one of the tents along the outskirts, picking up the battered scent of (y/n). The trail led him towards a smallish tent, pulling up the bottom seam of the tent to find (y/n) bound and gagged in the opposing corner while Karamatsu was admiring the edge of his sword.

"You know you're quite lucky," Karamatsu spoke in what sounded like a thankful tone. His expression didn't reflect what he was trying to project, "It

must've been very scary to be within that nasty dragon's clutches, used for his own amusement while you danced in his palm."

Silence was (y/n)'s response as she turned her head away from Karamatsu. He laughed and reached out to drag a finger along her jawline, trailing it down her neck to barely catch on the frayed neckline of the dress she was clearly dragged along in.

"Come now, my treatment of you couldn't be any worse than what he must've put you through," Karamatsu set the sword and sheath down on his cot before moving closer to her, his hunched figure blocking her from Osomatsu's view, "Just stop with the lies that he's told you, and I'll give you whatever you want."

"...I want you to give my father back and to leave me alone!" The gag must've been removed from (y/n)'s mouth. A crack of skin sounded at nearly the same time as a yelp.

"I've told you that your father is dead, eaten and swallowed whole by that monster," Karamatsu stood up while shaking his right hand a little, "As for the second part, I can't let that happen until you either tell me where the dragon is, or we arrive at the capital. My punishment for your crime will be far less painful than theirs."

A red mark began to grow on (y/n)'s left cheek when she became revealed behind Karamatsu's figure, the monster moving as if he was going to walk away, "What...become your mistress or die by strangulation? I'd rather choose death than confirm the rumors about your whores."

Karamatsu turned around quickly, the back of his armored hand connecting with her other cheek with a sickening crack. Osomatsu rolled underneath the hem of the tent and stood up quickly, little tufts of flame rolling from between his lips as he tempered his anger.

"I didn't realize you were taking virgin sacrifices, Karamatsu."

The commander glared down at me with such ferocity that I feared I finally crossed the line, my face sore and bleeding as it started to feel numb from

the hits he had given me. I couldn't lift my head up anymore before I heard something move within the tent.

"I didn't realize you were taking virgin sacrifices, Karamatsu."

I looked towards the new speaker, feeling my heart race as I saw a smug-looking Osomatsu standing behind the commander. There were more draconic features on his head and back, the pair of curled horns sprouting from near his temples and a smallish pair of leathery wings brought close to his back, a small lick of flame exhaling from his mouth with his breath.

"Oso--"

"You!" The commander shouted while reaching for the sword on his cot, swinging wide as soon as his hand touched the handle and making Osomatsu jump back in the small tent. The commander swung again, taking a step forward and pushing his advance to try and pin Osomatsu between his blade and the tent fabric.

"You've got something of mine," Osomatsu ducked underneath the blade to roll next to me, his nails growing into long claws that easily cut through the ropes that bound my legs and arms together.

"Yours?" The commander paused before sending the sword in an overhead swing, a metallic 'clang' ringing out as Osomatsu deflected it with a draconic hand, red scales sprouting from underneath his skin, "You've never claimed anything, dragon."

"Of course I have," Osomatsu growled, "You've killed the ones that were alive for simply being close to me."

He wrapped an arm around the back of my waist, bringing me close to his body. The commander gritted his teeth before lunging towards us in a charge, the sword thrust forward towards me. I felt Osomatsu's body shift before seeing the stab go wide, pushed aside once more by Osomatsu's free hand.

"You're a monster, something that never deserves any kind of happiness because you only destroy!"

"Are you sure you're not seeing a mirror?" Osomatsu pulled me back as the commander lashed out again, tearing through the tent fabric as the dragon in human form led me underneath the strike. Taking advantage of the opening, Osomatsu ran through the cut and pulled me along behind him.

"Hang on, cutie," Osomatsu pulled my arms to either side of his neck, his body swelling underneath me. Screaming in fear of falling and of being hurt, my hands grabbed onto whatever they could as I felt large muscles underneath his scales shift and pulse, the wings on his back growing with his sudden new size and lifting us off of the ground. Shouts and commands echoed around us as arrows filled the air, bouncing off of the scales and almost hitting me as Osomatsu flew higher into the air.

Soon, the shouts and cries fell away underneath us as the cool night air grew silent, the only sound being my terrified heartbeat and the steady wingbeats.

"Not to add to your list of bad news today, but you don't have much of a home to go back to," There was an odd echo to Osomatsu's voice, the rumble felt against my body as the words were clearly heard in my head. It was like he was speaking to me physically and mentally.

"What do you mean?" I felt like I had to shout to be heard, the wind blowing against my ears.

"The commander gave his soldiers a pillage order when they found your little farm. I had tried to save what I could, but I don't think there's much to live with anymore."

"What happened to you? Why weren't you there at the market...?" Questions bombarded my mind as the words fell from my lips, "Why didn't you tell me that my father was dead? Why are you here?"

Osomatsu remained silent as my countless questions filled the void. Soon, each question I asked tore a sob from my throat, tears streaming down my

face as I came to the realization that I had nothing to go back to, no one left to go home to.

"I happened to fall down close to your home, felled by one of Karamatsu's enchanted arrows and stuck as a human for a few days. The longer I stayed at your place, the more I wanted to know you, and so came with you to the market...since I sensed that you were terrified to go alone. After everything of yours sold out after you went to buy lunch, I thought I had enough time to go back to my lair for more money...originally intending to give you enough to live off of for a while before I finally left. When I saw the soldiers burning your farm down...plans changed."

"And what is your new plan now?" I rubbed the tears away from my eyes, partially elated that he hadn't abandoned me at the market.

"...I'm not sure. I can't leave you at your farm with nothing, and I can't leave you at the kingdom's gates in good conscience since you're wanted," Osomatsu hummed to himself.

"Were you lying about what you said? Lying about anything you told me?"

"Not outright. I only told you what I thought you needed to know," The dragon broke through the low cloud cover, gliding effortlessly up to the starry night sky, "Except for what I said at the toll gate."

I thought back towards Osomatsu lounging on the cart bench, an amused smirk across his face as he told me, 'I like you'. I buried my face against the crook of my elbow, the rough fabric rubbing against my roughed up cheeks.

"I still like you," Osomatsu echoed my memory of him, "I find you fun to be around, different from the prissy princesses that I've had to suffer through, and open-minded enough to realize that every creature is different."

His size suddenly shrunk back into his human form, my arms clinging around his neck as fear constricted the muscles while he turned to face me.

"I want to know what you think," A smile crossed his lips.

"You're terrifying!" I screamed as I held onto him, feeling us fall from the sky.

"I get that a lot!" He laughed in response, unfurling his wings to slow his descent as the rushing wind became a soft breeze. His arms wrapped around my lower back to keep me close to him as his eyes swept over my face, the smile only widening on his lips, "But that's not what I was asking about."

"You're wild, rude, a little infuriating with that uppity attitude you have, your highness...but I think I like it. I enjoyed your company while it was there, and really missed it when you left," I looked into the familiar dark eyes, feeling his arms bringing me closer to him as my life was literally in his hands, "With no home to go to now, I don't have much a choice but to tag along with you, Sir Dragon."

"Ugh," Osomatsu rolled his eyes in disgust before pressing his lips against mine, taking me by surprise before slowly pulling away, "Don't call me that ever again. My name is Osomatsu, as it always has been."

"Then, Osomatsu," I didn't bother hiding the blush as our lips collided again.

Hero!Osomatsu x Civilian!Reader

Inspired by shimmering_clouds's prompt.

(Some liberties were taken with this AU. Corrected some names after further research.)

"Are you finished yet?"

A voice cut through my thoughts, bringing me back to the present as the warm bath water swirled around my naked form. Another knock on the door sounded, marking the person on the other side as a little impatient.

"Just finishing up, Totoko!" I scrambled out of the bath and grabbed my towel, quickly drying off and wrapping myself up as I slid the door open. The young woman I called my roommate slightly raised an eyebrow as she looked down towards me, a change of clothes tucked underneath her arm.

"You fell asleep, didn't you?" She pushed past me and started to undo the twin pigtails tucked low behind her ears, releasing the thick brown hair before pulling the pink headband out. I shifted my gaze to the floor, shame settling on my face.

"I didn't fall asleep..." I clenched the front of the bath towel a little harder, "Just got lost in thought."

"About the date he missed?" Her words were a little muffled from holding the hair ties between her lips, but it didn't detract from the sting I felt, "(Y/n), Osomatsu is a busy man. There's going to be times when this happens."

"But Totoko, this is the first time it's ever happened...!" I looked up at her quickly, watching as she started to brush through her long brown locks, "He's never been late without warning me about it."

"Are you sure he's not cheating on you?"

"I know he's not," Scoffing, I turned on my heel and headed towards my room, closing the door behind me, "Osomatsu isn't that kind of guy..."

Letting the towel drop from my figure, I headed towards the dresser and pulled out a set of night clothes and panties, slipping into them before going back to the towel and ruffling my damp hair with it. Sitting heavily on the bed, I looked towards a small picture frame before picking it up gently.

A man with short dark hair and dark eyes smirked widely into the camera, an arm extended past the edge of the picture and the other resting securely around the shoulders of a younger me. My hair was quite a bit shorter than it was now, tied back into a small braid with a pair of sunglasses pushed up high to act as a headband. I looked to be on the cusp of embarrassment, a heavy blush sitting on my cheeks despite the smile on my face.

A soft sigh passed through my lips, allowing a smile to settle on my face as I fondly remembered the picture being taken after our first date many years ago. There were a few rough patches when he was honest about his flaws, but I remained by his side as he worked through them while always promising to never let them get between us.

Setting the picture frame down, I stood up to hang the towel on the hook behind my door, returning to the bed and laying on top of the sheets.

The man muttered curses to himself, his prey no longer in sight amongst the partially crowded night streets of Tokyo. Keeping still in mid-air despite the wind pulling at his short dark hair and red cloak, the man's eyes swept quickly through the night crowd, seeing the joy or sorrow of the drunkards that let themselves indulge in too much vice.

He had wanted to get this job done quickly, the call coming right before a scheduled date. Silently cursing the vow he made to himself and to the city, the man descended to the ground and braced himself for the soft landing.

"Charisma Red!" A few women cried out when they saw him land on an empty part of the sidewalk, drawing the crowd's attention to his sudden

presence. He swallowed the frustration and let a wide smirk settle on his face as the public began to press in, demanding signatures or pictures from the great hero.

"I didn't mean to disturb your night," Charisma Red called out, quickly signing his autograph on rushed items, "Just here to make sure that everyone gets home safely."

The ebbing crowd never seemed to grow smaller and Charisma Red bid everyone a fair night after a while before taking off into the sky once more, flying out of the city and towards the bay. Swooping in low across the water's surface, he slowed as he neared one of the many warehouses built near the edge of the harbor, pulling up towards the roof and gently landing. There were two other figures near the edge of the roof, turning to face him as he walked closer.

One was crouched low to the ground, his breathing mask protruding out like a feline muzzle while the clasp rose up towards the back of his head before jutting outwards, creating two feline 'ears'. His suit was a deep purple, blending into the night almost perfectly as a ragged black scarf and slim tail coasted gently on the breeze.

The other man wore a bodysuit with a deep 'V' neckline that dipped almost to his navel, the sparkles embedded in the suit catching every bit of light from Tokyo and reflecting it back to an obnoxious level. A silver visor covered his eyes before swelling into headphones over his ears and jutting out to the back with small wing designs. The extra-long white cloak trailed a few feet behind him, almost masking the large winged electric guitar resting on his back.

"Did your target fall back, too?" Charisma Red sighed as he rested a hand on his hip, looking between the two other men.

"...strangely, yeah," The cat man growled out, his metal nails lightly scratching against the roofing gravel in frustration.

"My quarry was no match for my intellect, little Charisma Red!" The other man laughed out boisterously, "Our mind games were intense and I had to

let him retreat when he called out for mercy from the songs that I was singing. Neither one of us gave the edge over the other--"

"Just say that you lost him, Captain Phonic Angel..." Charisma Red spoke through gritted teeth, making the blue-clad hero flinch back a little.

"I lost him when he ducked into an alleyway."

"Shit..." Charisma Red brought up his gray gloved hands, forming one into a fist and pressing his thumb against his teeth while the other hand rested underneath his opposing elbow.

"...we'll just hunt them down next time...and considering that Law isn't here, he may have captured his target."

"I'm not worried about next time, Nekokage..." The red hero glanced at the purple-clad hero before looking back towards the city, "I was worried about tonight. All five remaining villains come out in full force and disappear before all of them can be caught? They haven't had that kind of coordination before...not since..."

"Are you thinking that someone could be controlling them?" Captain Phonic Angel cut in, settling into a sitting position on the roof edge.

"That, or they were all working towards the same goal and somehow achieved it."

"...you're giving them too much credit, Charisma Red...they're not that smart..."

Charisma Red remained silent, hoping that he was overthinking what he had failed to do. Pulling back the red gauntlet on his arm, he stared at the time his wristwatch was showing him.

Not only was he late to the scheduled dinner date, but he was

four hours

late!

Quickly uttering a goodbye to his fellow heroes, Charisma Red shot off of the roof and sped towards his secret base, easily passing through the hidden entrance and stepping into a chamber that assisted in him disrobing as Charisma Red. Replacing the gray bodysuit and red hardened armor was a simple long-sleeved button-up red shirt that he tucked into black slacks, and his red shoes were swapped with black penny loafers. The red and gray glasses were pulled from his face, completely exposing his dark eyes as a black tie was fastened underneath the shirt collar.

Stepping out of the changing chamber was a simple man known to the world as Osomatsu Matsuno, a rookie businessman that was looking to earn his way to the top position in the company he worked with.

Swiping the cellphone from a desk as Osomatsu strode towards the stairs up to the place he called home, he looked through the messages to see only three texts from (y/n). His heart sank as he began to read through the first one, sent fifteen minutes before the date was supposed to start: '

Hey Osomatsu! I'm so excited for tonight, so I made sure to bring along some extra cash to spend on you. Don't even think about fussing about it! I want us to enjoy our 5th anniversary, so I don't mind splurging a little to buy the alcohol you really like. <3 I love you lots! See you when you get here.

'

The next message was sent two hours ago: '

You must be pretty busy with work. Don't worry about me and just focus on what you need to get done, Mr. Salaryman!

'

The last message was only from thirty minutes ago: '

I love you.

'

His hand tightened around the phone, mindful to not crush it. It was the text he received nightly to let him know that she was falling asleep, which meant he had missed his chance to try and explain his prolonged absence. He clenched his teeth and shoved the phone into his back pocket, a finger reaching up and pulling the tie loose.

Running a free hand through his hair, Osomatsu began to pace near the front door to the house. This was always going to be a problem in the relationship, but he refused to tell (y/n) his last remaining secret. He didn't have the heart to tell her that he was Charisma Red, a hero that protected the very city she lived in and the same hero that had fallen in love with her when she was trapped deep under rubble five-and-a-half years ago. (Y/n) never doubted Osomatsu for a moment and always kept his flaws a secret, but he knew that she'd be in constant danger the instant she understood who he really was.

"Shit..." Osomatsu pulled out the phone again, sending (y/n) a text saying that he had made it home safely and was truly sorry for missing the important night, offering a redo tomorrow night. He wouldn't get an answer until the morning, but he wouldn't worry abo--

A soft chime sounded from his phone, instantly drawing his attention since the sound was personally set as (y/n)'s message sound.

She should be asleep, not awake...

Osomatsu cautiously opened the message.

'

sounds great c u there

'

He couldn't help but laugh at her tired text, completely lacking the effort she usually made for writing out proper sentences. Osomatsu could imagine his message waking her up and her sleepily sending a reply back before passing out. He walked from the front door towards his bedroom, stripping

off the clothing and setting the phone on his bedside table before walking into the attached bathroom, aiming to clean off the entire day.

"Mr. Matsuno, this needs to be filed before you leave today," The secretary held out a folder with red tape lining the label, almost throwing it on top of Osomatsu's little stack as he walked by. He quickly adjusted for the unexpected addition and continued on his way towards the cubicle he was assigned, starting to work from the bottom of the pile through the top as his fingers flew over the keyboard, filling out empty spaces within the document editor and saving the project at each break. Finishing up the documents and folders he was handed, Osomatsu looked up towards the wall clock with a frown.

It was already past three in the afternoon and (y/n) had yet to send a single text.

Osomatsu had sent a few to her, giving her a '

good morning

' text that was followed by '

busy day at office, will message when i can

' a few hours later. He was debating calling her just to ensure that she was okay, or if she had stayed home sick.

"Mr. Matsuno, I--" The secretary knocked on the side of his cubicle, leaning over before Osomatsu stood up with his phone in his hand.

"I need to make an urgent call," He quickly pushed past the secretary, careful to not bump him to the ground, "Everything's finished with your folder on top."

"Hey, wai--!"

Osomatsu rushed out of the office, catching his breath in the elevator lobby before dialing (y/n)'s number from memory.

The line didn't even ring before an automated voice warned that the phone he was trying to reach was either out of the service area or was disconnected. The phone clattered to the floor as his hand started trembling, still near his ear before he threw it down to his side in anger, stooping to pick up the dropped phone and hanging up the call. Redialing her number, he confirmed that what he was hearing wasn't fake.

(Y/n)

never

turned her phone off without warning him beforehand.

Osomatsu's eyebrows furrowed while his eyes narrowed, his pupils nearly glowing bright red in anger.

It was painful to breathe, much less swallow down the iron taste that had risen up the back of my throat. My arms were numb from the elbow down, my back hurt from the slouched position I was forced into, and I didn't have the strength to hold my head up anymore.

Blood dripped from my mouth...or maybe it was from my nose?

"Are you sure that this is the right one?" A voice called out from somewhere within the dark room, sounding deep and a little slow as their verbal tic kicked in after the question.

"Absolutely..." A feminine voice responded, her heels clicking against the floor before I felt a sharp tug near the top of my head, the person grabbing a fistful of my hair and forcing me to look up at her.

Her gray skin was sick-looking, like a corpse bloated from soaking up too much water. Long green heeled boots stopped near her upper thighs, the only form of clothing on her whole body. Red tentacles covered the more

intimate parts of her female figure, winding their way around her legs, arms, and into her purple hair. A lone purple starfish clung to her exposed breast, the color matching the thick wavy hair that matted into larger tentacles as it traveled from her head to the ground.

She narrowed her ocean blue eyes at me, "You're so unlucky, (y/n). If your boyfriend was as smart as Law, then you wouldn't be in this predicament..."

My...boyfriend...?

I let my head fall when she yanked her fingers from my head, confusion surging over my battered face,

Osomatsu wouldn't come after me in person...he'd go get help...He promised he would...

My heart hurt at the thought of Osomatsu finding out that I wasn't at home or at work, imagining the panic as he'd try to get the police to help search for me.

"Can I continue the punishment?" The deep male voice asked. The tentacle woman looked past me, focusing on something behind me before shrugging.

"I don't see why not," With a small scoff, she turned around and walked towards some kind of table on the other side of the room, "If she breaks completely, I'm not going to be responsible for her corpse."

"What..." I winced at how rough my voice sounded

,

"...do you want from me?"

"Nothing from you, but we want everything from the man who swore to protect you," She leaned forwards over the table, metal clattering about before she turned with an empty syringe in her hands, the needle shoved into some dark container and the empty barrel filling up with pink fluid,

"You're just the means to an end, (y/n). We'll see how much Charisma Red actually cares for you..."

Charisma Red...?

"You've got...the wrong person..."

The woman hummed out a laugh, "Oh, I don't think so."

When the barrel of the syringe had filled up to her satisfaction, she pulled the needle from the container and set the glass bottle down on the table before taking long strides over to me. She tapped the side of the syringe to remove the oxygen, some of the liquid bubbling at the hollow point of the needle before dripping down to the ground.

I tried to lean away from her but the bonds holding me in place were too secure, and I cried out when the woman deftly found an injection site, sliding the needlepoint under my skin and slowly pressing the plunger down. There was a brief moment of relief as I felt the cool liquid race through my veins before the feeling was shredded by agony, the coolness replaced swiftly by a burning sensation that made me feel like my entire body was stuck in a raging inferno.

When the barrel of the syringe was empty, the tentacle woman pulled the needle out and tossed the used instrument away, the metal needle clattering against something hard in the distance.

I tried to scream, to pull away from my bonds, to get away from my body...but I didn't even know if I made a sound or progress on the restraints. My mind was overstimulated by whatever she had given me, the burning sensation intensifying gradually. It felt like the fluid was eating my body from the inside out.

Osomatsu...help me!!

Charisma Red stared wide-eyed at the chaos that was (y/n)'s bedroom.

The window was forced wide open from the outside, the wooden frame pulled outwards by some kind of tool as the window itself sat ajar in the track. (Y/n)'s room looked like it was ransacked as he slipped in through the window, taking in every detail he could.

The bed was disheveled, the bedside table knocked over with the lamp laying in the ground and the single picture frame smashed. There were signs of a fight near the dresser, one of the drawers hanging askew on its track as a sizable indent curved the flat top downwards, like someone had been slammed into it. The door to her room was crunched outward, hanging from just the bottom hinge.

"(Y/n)...what happened to you...?" Charisma Red hovered around the room, looking for some kind of hint as to who took her or what even happened. There wasn't any blood splatter on the walls or furniture, so he could only guess that there was some show of restraint from the attacker. He went back to the picture frame, gently picking it up and turning it over to expose the broken glass covering over the picture they had taken five years ago. Setting it back down, Charisma Red pried the door open and glided down the hallway to where (y/n) had told him her roommate stayed.

If she was home, then he'd question her. This 'Totoko' person must've heard something.

He opened the door cautiously, peering into the empty room before opening the door wide.

There was no furniture. Nothing to mark that someone had lived here at all.

Charisma Red floated into the room, looking at every crook he could find as bewilderment tried to flood his mind. The window was untouched, the door didn't have any signs of a boobytrap, and the closet door...was askew.

A faint pulsing purple light emanated from the closet, drawing his attention and bringing him closer. Pulling the sliding closet door open a little more revealed some kind of machinery, the purple light coming from a button or panel on the top of the flat box-like contraption. As he stared at it, the

purple light clicked to green and the box hummed to life, Charisma Red backing away quickly as a hologram flickered in front of him.

A large purple skinned man, abnormally proportioned with large bottom tusks, and a gray-skinned woman covered in octopus tentacles appeared with a laugh. The man had someone slung over his broad shoulder, but Charisma Red knew who it was by the pajama pants, a cute pattern that mimicked her favorite animal's outline with the color dyed as her favorite. He had given those to (y/n) for their 2nd anniversary...

"Charisma Red...or should I just call you Osomatsu Matsuno? You really should keep a better eye on your things," The woman jabbed a thumb towards (y/n)'s limp form, "If you want to take it back, then come find us."

The three figures morphed into a series of numbers that Charisma Red recognized as GPS coordinates, his mind memorizing the set before the image died. Bursting out from the room window, he took off towards the location.

Charisma Red knew this was a diversion, angered that he still came here with some vain hope that he could find a clue.

He hovered high above the indicated coordinates and glared down at the large expanse of ocean crashing against itself far below his feet. A foolish man would've blindly charged into the surging waves, thinking that there was some sort of base hidden underneath the surface.

No, he knew this spot well, and gritted his teeth in anger at the teasing he was going through.

This was the spot where Tokyo had lost two heroes, Hayaiman and Platonic Love. They were the younger two of the team, drawn to this location by the same villainess that had spearheaded (y/n)'s kidnapping. Charisma Red had been close by when they were ambushed, flying as quickly as he could to assist when communications were cut off from them.

He found them dead in the water.

His fists clenched tightly, the material rubbing against itself and making a harsh crunching sound as he felt his blood begin to boil. Octopuko had been taunting him from the start, and who knows what was happening to (y/n) while he meandered in her game of cat-and-mouse.

Forcing his hands to relax, Charisma Red closed his eyes and focused on his hearing, pushing past the sounds of the churning ocean underneath him to pick out screams and chattering from the nearby cities. If (y/n) had been in their hands since last night, she may not have the energy to scream for help anymore...

He pushed further past the loud talking and shouting, searching for that familiar voice he had only heard two days ago.

"...Osomatsu..."

His eyes flew open, turning towards the rough plea of his alias' name and streaking through the sky like a comet.

I fell to the floor, the short drop feeling like thousands of miles. I couldn't move anymore, the burning frying my nerves and making my body feel numb. It was like every limb had fallen asleep at once.

I couldn't take it anymore.

I didn't know what they wanted from me, but Osomatsu wasn't going to be stupid enough to charge in on his own. He was just a businessman...but they seemed convinced that the man I was dating was Charisma Red, one of the heroes that protected Tokyo.

"Can I start now?" The large man stomped over, his footsteps rattling through the floor as he came closer to me.

"Go ahead," The woman waved off the question with a hand, "The drug should have run its course by now. Don't come crying to me when you break her."

The man laughed with his verbal tic, a sweaty hand clamping around my left upper arm and restarting the fire in my nervous system. I screamed as loud as I could, my ears only picking up a whimper as the man dragged me upwards. His other hand intertwined itself into my hair, pulling my head up to look at him and I mentally recoiled from the reflection in his eyes.

My nose had shifted slightly to the right, tracks of dried blood creating almost vertical lines from my nostrils to my lips where the tracks grew thicker and fell towards my chin. My eyes were slightly swollen from crying and sleeplessness, coagulating blood still dripping over my left eye from some wound on my head.

"Little doll," The man jeered as he dragged me towards the table where the woman had gotten the syringe.

The room we were in shook violently like something had hit the building, a horrid rending filling the air before the ceiling began to collapse near the woman. She shouted in surprise, barking out something that the man reacted to quickly, dropping me to the floor and grabbing a large club from the table. I struggled to move my head to see what had happened, or what hit the building.

The dust and debris began to settle from the hole in the ceiling, rebar ripped apart from the collision as sunlight spilled in through the hole, revealing a single humanoid figure standing in the dust cloud. Smaller chunks of concrete fell before the room went quiet, the cloud beginning to settle and revealing the brilliant red outfit they wore.

Charisma Red.

The glasses on his face made it hard to see where he was looking, the light playing with the shadows on his face. The red cloak settled behind him and some of the dust settled on his armored costume and dark hair before he shifted to look behind him, staring down the tentacle woman.

"You must be mad, coming in here alone," She laughed at him.

There was no response as my heart thudded heavily, watching Charisma Red quietly turn back towards the man and slightly lowering his head, my eyes meeting his finally through the lenses. I tried to move something, viciously willing my body to twitch or show some kind of sign that I was still alive.

"No response, hero?" The woman scoffed, "I left you such a lovely present--"

He was too fast to track for me.

One moment, Charisma Red was standing perfectly still, and the next, he had punched the woman deep in her gut, the collision echoing like a clap of thunder. She doubled over in pain, coughing and spewing something out before the large man roared and charged. Charisma Red dipped under the club and struck the man in the head, a glow building up behind his glasses.

"No pain!" The man grabbed Charisma Red's fist and pulled him into a wide arc, the hero acting as an impromptu weapon when he slammed into the nearby wall. The large man tried to pull his fist away, raising the club to slam on top of the hero, but his hand was held fast by a gray glove. Lifting the purple man like a ragdoll for a moment before plowing him back into the ground, the hero used the momentum to pull himself free of the crumbling wall and launch straight towards the woman.

She had recovered from his first punch, using her tentacle hair to block the second hit and wrapping his arm with the red tentacle. Charisma Red didn't pull back in time and she used his momentum against him, spinning in a circle and smacking him into the wall right behind me. Debris clattered to the ground around me, some of it hitting my skin and starting the burning chain reaction again. The woman released her hold on the hero and walked closer, her tentacle hair dropping towards me and dragging me away from where Charisma Red was, both the ground contact and her tentacles causing me to whimper in pain.

"If you're acting like this much of a fool, then this thing must mean something to you, Charisma Red," Her tentacles shifted around my body, the slimy things wrapping around my neck and wrists, forcing my arms out

while holding me up like a shield between her and Charisma Red, "Oh, that's right...she doesn't know you by your hero name, only by Osomatsu."

A glint of red light flashed from where Charisma Red was, piercing the remaining dust cloud and streaking outwards. The light tightened into a beam as it came closer to me, the searing heat that I expected was instead a gentle warmth that barely brushed against my left cheek before continuing behind me. The woman screamed in pain, her tentacles writhing and releasing me from their hold.

I expected to fall to the ground again, only to be held by a pair of arms that tucked me close to someone's body. Barely able to look up at the person, the red pine symbol told me who it was. Charisma Red's arms trembled a little as he stood up from the crouched position, his arms keeping me close to his chest as the world around me blurred.

The dark of the room fell away to a bright sunset, the reds and oranges cascading across the open sky as the world beneath me fell away. It would have been a beautiful sight if I wasn't fighting to stay conscious, my nerves blazing in agony at the physical contact against the hero's arms and suit. As Charisma Red glanced down at me with a worried look, I saw underneath the glasses and partially recognized my boyfriend's face as my mind faded into darkness.

Charisma Red knew he'd be overwhelmed as soon as he gained his bearings in the dark room, feeling Octopuko behind him and staring down Hippopon standing in front of a downed (y/n). He could handle Hippopon fine on his own, but Octopuko wasn't someone he was capable of fighting in a two-against-one match...not with (y/n) still there. His goal shifted from beating the crap out of the villains to getting her out safely as quickly as he could. It meant losing track of the building they decided to use as a base, but it also meant that (y/n) would live.

He saw his chance to escape when Octopuko tried to use (y/n) as a human shield, controlling his eyebeam with precision to only injure the villain and escaping when she dropped the civilian.

Charisma Red could instantly tell something was wrong when (y/n) tried to shy away from his touch, like he was physically hurting her somehow. Knowing that Octopuko was proficient with toxins and poisons, she could've used some before he even showed up. The only person he knew that could effectively combat her venom was Nekokage...

"...Osomatsu..."

His alias' name fell from (y/n)'s lips in agony, making him look down towards her and watch helplessly as she passed out in his arms.

I slowly opened my eyes to see a white tiled ceiling, the lights turned off as moonlight gently streamed through the partially open window. The breeze that came through felt nice and cool against my skin, feeling similar to a nice shower after a sweltering hot day and I took in a slow, deep breath.

Nothing hurt much anymore, at least not like it had beforehand. My arms were sore, but I could move my fingers without pain. I slowly raised a hand to my face, feeling the bandages stuck to my nose and forehead before setting it down on something soft. The softness drew my attention towards the short hairs that ran between my fingers, gently pulling at them and realizing that they were stuck to a head. The head was facing away from me and attached to a torso that leaned against the bed I was laying in. I lowered my hand from the head towards the torso, feeling the sturdy fabric of whatever the person was wearing and pulling at it before recognizing it as some kind of long shirt in the moonlight.

"Are you still out of it?" The person spoke, startling me and snapping my focus from their shirt to their face, their chin resting on the crossed arms pressing against the mattress.

"I'm sorry..." I instantly withdrew my hand from their back, laying it across my chest, "I've...just been through a lot today..."

"I know you have," The tone identified the person as a male, his voice soft-spoken, "You've been through too much in a twenty-four-hour period."

"Was it a full day?"

"Considering it's almost 10 p.m., I'd say so," He laughed a little, "And that means that I've messed up our anniversary again."

"Anniver--" I leaned up a little more, lifting my back off of the propped up pillows and getting a closer look at the man's face, the fog lifting from my mind as I recognized the comforting smile of Osomatsu, "Osomatsu...!"

I fully sat up and reached towards him, the action surprising him as my hands clung to his back while my face rested between his neck and shoulder. He cautiously put his arms around my back when it was clear that I wasn't letting go.

"(Y/n), you should probably lay back down...you're not fully healed."

"I don't care," I felt my eyes sting as tears began to well up, "I need to thank you for what you did..."

"And what did I do?" His hands shifted on my back, rubbing in slow circles before settling low on my waist and resting on the back of my neck.

"You got help for me...and Charisma Red came to rescue me," My fingers tightened on his shirt, "You did it, Osomatsu...you saved me."

"That wasn't all I did, (y/n)..." Osomatsu pulled himself away from me and stood up from the bed I was laying in, moving towards the closed room door and flicking something. Light flooded the room from the bedside lamp and I realized that I wasn't in a hospital like I originally thought.

It was a small room with just the bed and bedside table holding the lamp and a glass of water, leaving enough room for some more furniture that were clearly optional for the homeowner. My eyes swept over the room to settle on Osomatsu still standing by the door.

His short dark hair was a little disheveled and messy, like he had a rough night of sleep, and the familiar smirk rested on his lips as he regarded me

with his dark eyes. A flood of red color on his clothing caught my eye, drawing my attention to...

...Charisma Red's outfit.

I glanced up at my boyfriend's face and back down towards the hero's outfit, my brain taking a moment to connect the obvious clues standing in front of me. To solidify my line of thinking, Osomatsu took out the glasses from his waistband and flipped them open, sliding them over his nose and ears, completing the Charisma Red look.

"Surprise."

"...that really was you..." I sucked in a breath before placing my hands over my face, uncertain of how to feel about the reveal.

"I tried to keep you safe from the people that I fight against," Osomatsu sounded closer before his gentle hand lay on top of my hand, sliding back until he was holding me in his arms again, "This happened because I didn't want you to know about what I really do."

"Charisma Red--"

"Please...don't call me that here," He was quick to interrupt, his tone hurt.

"...Osomatsu..." I restarted, "Was what you showed me real? Were you acting at all when we were on our dates?"

"Nothing was faked," Osomatsu tightened his grip on me, pulling me as close as he could without making me uncomfortable, "I've been honest with you since we started dating...(Y/n), I love you more than anyone else I've ever known. When I saved you after that earthquake almost six years ago...I couldn't forget about you, so I made a second life for myself to be with you. It was nice to know that you loved me for me, not for the name I carry."

I shifted my hands from my face to his back, reaching underneath his arms and feeling his head slightly rub against mine, "Knowing that you're Charisma Red kinda makes sense now..."

"And why's that?" He hummed softly.

"Whenever you were late to one of our dates, the newspaper headlines spoke of some heroic action the next day," I laughed a little, "I guess I just didn't pay enough attention to what was going to realize what was happening."

"I don't mind that," He pulled away slightly and took off the glasses, resting our foreheads together without aggravating the bandage, "Let the world talk about the good I've done. I just want you."

"Even if I'm dense and not current on events?"

"Especially that," Osomatsu smirked before pressing his lips against mine in a gentle kiss, pulling away to give another smile, "I'm a selfish man, (y/n)."

"How dare you, Osomatsu," I playfully chided, "Who knew that this was how Charisma Red really acted in private?"

"Oh, shut up and love me," He growled before kissing me more passionately, pressing me back into the bed as he crawled over me.

》》======¤ Six Months Later ¤=======《《

The sky was crying gently, weeping silently over a small group of people standing near the edge of a cliff face, silently watching the powerful waves colliding with the rocks far below. Each of the four people all held a bouquet of flowers arranged in a white sleeve with a thick black ribbon fastening the stems together, the ribbon tugged by the wind created by the swirling currents of the ocean and cliffside.

The people were all dressed in black, some wearing full suits while others were less formal, but all of them had a somber look on their face before one of them stepped forward.

"Thank you for your service."

Without another word, he held out the bouquet of flowers and let them fall over the side, tumbling down until they were slammed into the rocks by an incoming wave. The rushing water dragged the shredded bouquet out into the ocean with each receding roll of waves.

The other three followed his example, uttering soft words of thanks before releasing their flowers. Only the sound of the crashing waves far below broke the silence hanging between the four men, none of them willing to speak.

One by one, the assembled men began to walk away from the cliff, heading down the sloping hill that formed the cliffside and into their individual vehicles. Before long, only one man stood on the cliff, staring down at the crashing waves before closing his eyes and muttering a quiet apology for not being faster in their time of need.

I stretched while standing, pushing the back of my hand against my spine as I groaned from the strain. My other hand held onto a broom, pausing for a short moment from sweeping the hardwood floor as my body complained loudly before I heard the front door close.

"Welcome back, Osomatsu," I called out from the second floor, turning towards the stairway to ensure my voice traveled down. A pair of shoes thumped on the ground before I heard someone walk up the stairway, seeing the damp figure of my husband ascending the staircase in his black business suit. He froze when he saw the broom in my hands.

"(Y/n)...!" Instantly, Osomatsu was in front of me with concern written all over his face, his dark eyes scanning my body before holding my colored gaze, "The doctor said that you shouldn't be doing lots of housework!"

"Osomatsu," I chided, lightly slapping his hand away from the broom as he tried to take it from me, "She said that I shouldn't be doing any heavy lifting or bending over. Last I checked, I can still sweep for short periods of time."

"But the baby...!"

"It's still got some time in the oven, hero. It's not at risk of popping out if I twist my hips a little."

Osomatsu's lips screwed into a worried bite, letting the broom stay in my grip before he placed his hands on my shoulders. I sighed inwardly as his eyes grew firm, knowing where his thoughts were taking him.

"Fine," I leaned the broom against the closest wall, "I'll sit my five-month pregnant butt downstairs. Heaven help me if I actually want to do some physical activity around the house."

"(Y/n), I just don't want to stress the baby or you out," Osomatsu easily lifted me up off of my feet, taking me by surprise before gliding down the stairs, his feet not even walking down the steps.

"You've been treating me like a fragile creature since we found out that I was pregnant," I stared up at him with a partially raised eyebrow, "It makes me wonder if you're going to faint at the birthing, too."

"No, I won't," A small laugh escaped his lips, turning his dark eyes down towards me before he lay me on the large sectional couch, pillows already propped up behind my back as he tucked himself under my calves and took off the house slippers I wore, "There's not a lot that can make me panic...I just don't want you or the baby to be hurt by something I do."

I couldn't hold back the satisfied moan as his strong hands started massaging the soles of my feet, his warm fingers working in between my toes and rubbing the tendons, "You're not going to hurt...either of us. You may be the strongest man alive, but I know you wouldn't harm the baby or myself."

"How long were you on your feet today?"

"A few hours with lots of breaks in between," I lay my head back as Osomatsu's hands worked their way up to my calves, his touch nearly making my eyes roll to the back of my head.

I knew that I could've just asked Osomatsu for a massage anytime I wanted, but they always felt better when he gave them willingly without me asking for it. I rested my right arm over my eyes, just relaxing in the moment as I reveled in the new life I had with the hero known to the public as Charisma Red.

After I had been rescued by Charisma Red (and found out that he was my boyfriend the entire time!), he asked me to marry him when I had fully healed from the torture. It was a quiet wedding with a courthouse ceremony and a small reception that only had around ten people. Three attendees were close friends of Osomatsu, to which I guessed that they were the other heroes of the city and didn't ask how they knew him.

There wasn't much of a honeymoon planned, but Osomatsu and I enjoyed each other's constant company when I moved into his home. I became pregnant shortly after and have been affectionately smothered ever since.

A small smile crept over my lips as I laughed inwardly at the times Osomatsu had been shocked when he found me doing something that he deemed dangerous to the baby's health, such as bending over to put the dirty dishes into a dishwasher, or standing on my toes to reach for something up high in the bedroom closet. Yes, it was a little overbearing at times and I got frustrated with him because of it...but I didn't mind the attention at all.

"(Y/n), do you...really not mind not knowing if our kid is going to be a boy or a girl?"

"You're the one that said you wanted it to be a surprise," I looked down at him from underneath my arm, pulled from my thoughts as his hands stopped moving along my legs, "Would you like for me to schedule an appointment to find out?"

"No..." A dark look passed over Osomatsu's eyes as he turned his head away from me a little, "...I just..."

The silence turned heavy.

"Nevermind," He shook his head and looked back towards me with an award-winning smile, "I'm just worrying myself over nothing."

"No," I sat up a little, "That look wasn't 'nothing', Osomatsu...What is it?"

The dark look returned tenfold before he sighed as he hung his head low, "I just can't shake this feeling that I get whenever I look at you. Remembering what you went through before we were married...it kills me inside when I imagine it happening to you again and I start to fear for the safety of our child."

Osomatsu gently shifted his gaze towards me and rested a hand over my swollen abdomen, his hand warm through the thin shirt I was wearing.

"This is the happiest I've ever been, and I know what life tends to do when someone is high on cloud nine."

I carefully put a hand over his, our fingers intertwining.

"If I know you, then I know that you're not going to let that happen again," Shifting my position so that I was sitting next to Osomatsu, I leaned over and kissed him on the lips.

He returned the kiss, bringing his free hand up to my cheek and reaching behind my head as he deepened the kiss. Pulling his other hand free from mine, he wormed his way out of the lightly damp suit jacket before pressing himself against me, pushing me into the back of the sectional couch as our kiss grew heated. My legs pressed against the sides of his hips while the black tie loosened around Osomatsu's neck and his shirt fell to the ground immediately after, revealing his sculpted torso underneath a tight tank top and his muscled arms fully exposed to the air. I moaned into the kiss as I felt his belt slide free from the loops of his slacks, the sound spurring him onward as he guided me to lay flat on the couch.

Osomatsu needed this and I wasn't about to stop him from seeking his comfort.

Osomatsu looked down at his wife as she lay gasping underneath him, their sweat mingling on her skin as she teetered on the edge of falling asleep. He had been careful with her, just as he always did in their previous couplings, and positioned himself to sit on the floor next to (y/n), his left hand gently pushing away the stray hairs that had fallen from her hairstyle.

His lips turned upwards in a smile as she tiredly reached up to his hand, briefly holding it before falling down. Her beautiful gem-like eyes finally slid closed and her breathing evened out, Osomatsu's sensitive hearing telling him that (y/n) had fallen asleep like she usually did after the rougher couplings.

He had been worried about it at first, fearing that he was too aggressive and roughed her up way too much. When (y/n) woke up, he had apologized for knocking her out and expected a tongue lashing for what he did. Osomatsu was shocked to hear that she enjoyed him being rough and she only fell asleep afterwards because she felt safe next to him.

Osomatsu instantly toned down his passion when she happily revealed her pregnancy after a visit to the emergency room due to her constantly throwing up, cautious about jostling the fetus too much and not wanting to cause injury to (y/n). He had been told by their doctor that sex wouldn't harm the baby at all, but Osomatsu wasn't going to take his word for it...not when he was Charisma Red and could punch through a concrete wall with ease.

After ensuring that (y/n) was sleeping, Osomatsu picked her up gently and floated up the stairway towards their bedroom. Laying her down on the futon, he carefully laid the duvet over her and went to gather their clothes from the living room before tossing them into the washer, starting the load before going back to the bedroom. Pulling out some clean clothes from the dresser, Osomatsu looked back down at the sleeping form of (y/n) as a soft smile crossed his lips.

After the sorrowful day he had, he was happy that he knew he could always come home to a loving wife and, soon enough, a child.

My eyes shot open as a sharp pain lanced up my spine, sucking in a breath through gritted teeth. I would've curled up on my side to relieve the pain if not for the swollen stomach preventing me from bringing my knees to my chest.

Seven months...thirty-three weeks pregnant.

"(Y/n)...?" Osomatsu was instantly by my side, woken up either by a cry I didn't realize I made or some supernatural instinct of his, "Was it the baby...?"

"Yeah...just a really strong kick," I gasped, squeezing my eyes shut and pressing my face into the pillow, "Must've been right near the spine."

I didn't see Osomatsu's face but I could imagine his worry. We didn't know if he would pass on any of his superhuman abilities to our child, or if they would be born as a normal human. The doctor had told us that the baby tends to test more of its muscles the closer it came to labor, so the previous nudges and pushes would feel more like jabs as it punched and kicked into the thinner walls keeping it in place.

I looked over to Osomatsu, seeing his dark figure move away for a moment before he turned on the light on his bedside table, illuminating the dark bedroom before turning back towards me with the expected worried look on his face.

"Anything I can do for you?"

He looked much worse for the wear, dark circles spreading underneath his eyes while his gentle hues regarded me with concern. Osomatsu had become more busy as Charisma Red, the villains of the city becoming more and more active lately despite everything he and the other heroes had been doing to ensure that everyone was safe.

"Maybe...draw a warm bath for me?" I forced myself to loosen my leg muscles as they tightened from the pain, "It may help me relax."

"Of course," He leaned in and kissed my cheek before throwing the duvet off of him, leaving the bedroom and turning into the bathroom just down the hallway. I heard the water start before the tub started filling up.

Slowly sitting myself up, I shifted onto my knees and used the wall next to the futon to help myself up to my feet, the protruding stomach making things more difficult. I made it halfway before I felt Osomatsu's hands on my hips, easily lifting me into a standing position.

"You could've waited."

"I didn't want to," I stuck my tongue out at Osomatsu playfully, retracting it before giving him a kiss, "I can't be fully dependent on my superhero husband for every little thing."

"No, but sometimes I really want you to," He returned the kiss and helped me walk towards the bathroom.

Charisma Red glared down at the large purple man pinned beneath the rubble, the dark mask torn apart and revealing the two large tusks jutting out from his bottom teeth. The fight had been hard, but not impossible to win. The hero took in a deep breath and stayed hovering above the struggling villain, knowing that Hippopon would divulge information without realizing it. The fact that Hippopon was alone concerned Charisma Red, knowing that he was always paired up with another villain to be the brute force they needed for something...which meant that they didn't need him for their current objective.

"Start talking, Hippopon," Charisma Red called out, seeing the man flinch as the hero moved a little closer, the wind lazily tugging at his cloak, "What were you trying to do with this factory?"

"No answer! No answer!" Hippopon laughed out, his verbal tic closing the last word. The hero's eyes widened in frustration, swooping down and grabbing a fistful of the leather vest the villain wore, the material crinkling under his grip.

"Why are you alone?!"

"Dr. Sheh told me," The large man grabbed Charisma Red's left arm in one hand, squeezing it tightly, "Told me to kill you."

Charisma Red gritted his teeth as he felt the vice-like grip nearly rip his arm from its socket, instantly letting go of Hippopon and grabbing a tusk with his other hand, twisting away from the rubble and pulling the man free before slamming him back down in an arc.

The villain didn't let go and Charisma Red was dragged down through the crumbling floor with him, speeding up his fall by flying straight down and using Hippopon's large body as a shield. They both collided with the bottom floor, creating a large plume of dust and powdered concrete. Charisma Red sucked in a breath as he pulled his arm from the limp hand of Hippopon, stifling a yell of pain as his shoulder hung loose from the joint. Glancing down to see that his arm was indeed out of the socket, he looked around to find a solid wall to push against.

As painful as this was, he would gladly accept it as his burden.

After all, (y/n) was going through

much

worse.

Assisting his hand to lay flat on the wall, he carefully lined up his upper arm with his shoulder and let out a deep breath, shoving his shoulder into his arm hard when his lungs were empty. A loud '

pop

' was heard, sending a wave of crashing pain into Charisma Red's shoulder before spreading down his torso and up his neck.

Despite emptying his lungs of air, a strangled cry escaped his lips before he bit down on his tongue to keep from making any other sounds. Glancing over his shoulder to see that Hippopon hadn't moved, Charisma Red slowly

let his arm recover from the trauma, flexing his fingers to ensure that there wasn't any lasting damage or harm.

The name that the villain had said before being knocked out had put Charisma Red into a worse mood, dashing the hope that this would be an easy job. He wanted to be by (y/n)'s side as she was being driven to the hospital, the call coming in just before he drove her there in their shared vehicle. She told him to go save people and called for a maternity-service taxi while he left to clean up the mess that Hippopon had caused.

Charisma Red admitted to himself that he rushed this job, throwing caution out the window while trying to quickly subdue the formidable villain and nearly destroying the building Hippopon had picked to attack him in. Something in his gut screamed at him to be at the hospital, to wait by the delivery room and be there when (y/n) was wheeled to their reserved room with their newborn child.

"Well, well," Hippopon stood up, his jaw hanging open like it was broken, "Charisma Red, you were quite violent this time. Is something on your mind?"

Charisma Red's eyes went wide as he turned to face the standing villain, the voice not matching what Hippopon normally sounded like. The hero felt his anger swell within his gut, narrowing his eyes and clenching his fist as the mocking laughter of another villain sounded from Hippopon's broken mouth.

"Dr. Sheh..." Gritting his teeth, Charisma Red silently swore at his impatience, knowing that he should've realized the difference between the real Hippopon and the robot masquerading as him, "Since when did you and Geek Otaku team up...?"

"Since we received word that Octopuko was taken into custody after acting on a hunch she had," Hippopon's body shrugged, Charisma Red hearing the whirring of gears and pistons with each movement, "A hunch that involved you."

"Aren't you too busy fighting off Law and Captain Phonic Angel?" The hero let a smirk rest on his lips, the tension never leaving his eyes. He knew that he was being watched by the villain and could only hope that he hadn't noticed the worry on the hero's face. Charisma Red couldn't risk involving (y/n) again.

"Oh, hyuoh?" The verbal tic of the villainous cyborg sounded through the amused laugh, "Shouldn't

you

be somewhere else?"

"I only need to be where evil appears in order to keep people safe," Charisma Red quickly answered, narrowing his eyes into a glare as he felt a familiar heat build up in them, "That includes finding you wherever you're hiding, Dr. Sheh."

"You can try, but I have a baby to deliver."

Hippopon stiffened for a moment before falling to the ground limply, leaving Charisma Red in stunned silence before he flew up through the ceiling and burst out of the crumbling building into the night sky. A primordial scream of anger tore through his throat as Charisma Red streaked towards the hospital where (y/n) was, pushing himself to fly faster towards the far away city.

"Congratulations, Mrs. Matsuno," The nurse commented as I tried to catch my breath, opening my eyes slowly to see him cradle my newborn, "It's a healthy baby girl."

A girl...

I gave a gentle smile and held out my arms, expecting the nurse to let me hold her. He seemed to smile underneath the surgical mask and took a step back, a confused look crossing my face.

"I'll bring her back when both of you are all cleaned up," His voice sounded gentle, turning away and walking through a pair of doors that led to a separate room. I rested my head back down and let the staff do what they needed to do, finding my thoughts wandering towards Osomatsu and the concerned look on his face when I assured him that I'd be all right while he went to work.

"Ma'am, did you send your baby to the room already?" Another nurse called out after a while, lowering my legs from their spread position and covering my lower body with a blanket so I wouldn't be indecent while I was brought to my room.

"No," A fearful knot started forming in my stomach, "A nurse had taken her to be cleaned up..."

I didn't miss the confused look on the nurse's face as she looked towards the doctor, the man furrowing his brow before leaving the birthing room.

"...what happened?"

"We'll take you to your room," The second nurse tried to help me to the wheelchair that had been pushed into an easy position for me to slip into.

"Where's my baby?" I pressed further, resisting her hands as she tried to pull me up from the sitting position on the table, "Where is she?!"

"Please, ma'am," The nurse sounded concerned, "We'll move you to your room and give you what information we have there."

The tone she used was an attempt at being comforting, but the words she spoke made my fear all the more real.

Osomatsu's and my newborn daughter had been stolen.

"Is my husband here yet...?" I weakly followed where she wanted me to go, my legs sore and my pelvic area crying out for relief from the constant strain over the last few hours.

"No, ma'am."

I pushed my face into my hands, stifling a whimper as I was pushed out of the delivery room in a wheelchair. My body became numb as the nurse pushed the button for the elevator, waiting patiently for the elevator car to arrive and pressing another button once inside to send it to the bottom floor.

The elevator doors opened on the ground floor to reveal a breathless Osomatsu, startling me with his rushed appearance and haphazard clothing. It looked like he had run all the way to the hospital from the house, but the look in his eyes told me a completely different story.

He already knew about what happened...and the small glow deep within his eyes warned that he knew who had done it.

"Osomatsu..." I tried to fight back the tears as I reached out to him, grabbing onto his hand and pressing the back of it against my cheek. My husband didn't say anything and simply walked next to the wheelchair as the nurse awkwardly pushed me towards the maternity ward of the hospital. His thumb gently rubbed against my own as the knowing silence between us grew.

Osomatsu didn't speak until we were safely in the reserved room, alone.

"Are you all right?"

"No, I'm not...! Our daughter was

stolen

, Osomatsu!" The tears flowed freely as my throat tightened up. Osomatsu stepped close and held my head between his hands, making me look up at him.

"Are

you

all right...?"

I closed my eyes as I hiccuped through a sob, realizing that this was Charisma Red asking the questions, "Yes...I'm physically fine..."

"Did you see who took our daughter?"

"No," I shook my head against his hands as he kneeled down in front of me, looking into my eyes at a lower level, "I couldn't see his face because of the surgical mask, but I don't remember seeing him until after she was born."

"I want you to stay here," Osomatsu leaned forward, resting his forehead against mine, "There's security down the hall and a nurse's station on the opposite end. If he comes back, I want you to call for help immediately."

Releasing my head, Osomatsu stood up and pulled off his shirt and pants, revealing the Charisma Red outfit underneath. Sliding the glasses into place over his ears, he moved towards the window and opened it.

"Please find her...!" I tried to call out before he vanished into the night sky, recoiling back from the sudden air pressure change as he launched from the room. I moved myself gently from the wheelchair to the bed, praying that Osomatsu would have enough strength to keep our child safe.

Charisma Red shot upwards, stopping above the hospital and looking down towards the people on the street. He focused his hearing to pick out any abnormal sounds that could label the thief from the common rabble.

His eyes snapped open as he heard a familiar laugh overlapping the whimper of a baby, his pupils narrowing in the direction of the back alley between the hospital and its detached parking garage. Quickly descending, Charisma Red picked out the sprinting form of Dr. Sheh as he cradled something wrapped in a thick blanket, the muffled whimper coming from his arms. The superhero landed a few feet from him, his knees bending to absorb the impact as his glowing eyes locked onto Dr. Sheh's wide and shocked gaze.

"I believe you have someone dear to me."

The villain swallowed loudly, taking a few steps back before a wicked grin pulled his lips back as he pulled out a remote from his belt, "Don't get too cocky, Charisma Red...I've got explosives installed around the hospital. One wrong move and the people inside go bye-bye!"

Charisma Red barely glanced down at the remote before instantly closing the distance between the two figures, his right hand quickly darting out and twisting Dr. Sheh's wrist in a sharp angle, making the villain cry out in pain as his hand released the remote. It clattered to the floor between the two men. The swaddled baby let out a cry, sucking in deep breaths before whimpering.

The hero yanked down on the villain's hand, Dr. Sheh's cyborg body simultaneously slamming into the pavement below while Charisma Red's other arm reached out and gently held onto the baby before it could fall down with the demented scientist.

"Wha-what the hell...?" Dr. Sheh coughed out, pulling his hand away from Charisma Red's grip and crawling out of the crater he had created, "What the hell happened to you? You were never this violent before!"

Charisma Red shot Dr. Sheh an intense glare, the inner blaze of his eyes growing in luminosity. The cyborg scientist flinched away, raising his hands over to his head to protect himself.

"I'll only give you one warning to spread to your league," The deep growl in Charisma Red's voice was nearly animalistic, "I'll play your little games and entertain the small back-and-forth banter if you wish...but come close to my wife or my daughter

ever

again and I'll make sure that you leave with more than a bruised ego and body."

Charisma Red strode into the hospital after ensuring that the baby in the blanket was real and indeed his daughter, holding down Dr. Sheh while he checked before letting the villain go to spread his warning. He was

swarmed by nurses and a few doctors that took the baby from his arms, refusing to answer questions from a paparazzi reporter had that had seen him walking into the hospital and giving him the assurance that he'd answer as many questions as the reporter wanted after he ensured that the baby had been delivered to the mother safely.

A nurse in charge of delivering the baby to (y/n)'s room had agreed to let Charisma Red escort her, a flustered look on her face as she walked in silence with the hero's presence nearly looming over her. She briskly walked to the room, knocking on the door lightly before opening it and announcing her arrival.

"Mrs. Matsuno, your--"

"You found her!" I nearly screamed in joy, seeing Osomatsu as Charisma Red standing slightly behind the nurse, our daughter held in her arms and completely forgetting about the lancing pain in my hips, almost falling to the ground as soon as I jumped out of the bed. He was quick to catch me, my knees not even touching the ground.

"I heard some crying about a lost child and I happened to be in the area," His voice was calm and soothing, the words a lie to me but the tone was full of assurance. Osomatsu's hands shifted and helped me back to the bed, letting me lay down as the nurse brought our daughter close.

"Thank you so much..." I took our daughter in my arms, pulling the blanket down a little to see the beginnings of her dark-colored hair. Leaning back as far as I was able, the nurse helped me position the baby against my chest, feeling her little heart pound away against my skin.

"Charisma Red, I believe that we should leave the new mother alone for a while."

"Of course," Osomatsu gave me a quick wink before leaving the room, letting me take in the silence for a while before I heard the window open.

"Grand exit, then...?" I looked over as Charisma Red closed the window behind him, slipping into the clothes that I had folded while he was gone.

"They all like it," Osomatsu pulled the shirt over his head and tucked away the glasses before leaning over, his lips pressing against my forehead gently, "I wanted to get back here as quickly as I could."

As he pulled away, I looked up at him in worry.

"I promise to protect you and Tsuki," Osomatsu's eyes were firm and sure.

"Tsuki?" I raised an eyebrow at the name.

"Yeah," His smile widened before looking down at our sleeping infant daughter, "Our own little moon."

I hummed before returning his smile, leaning my head up a little to touch our foreheads together.

"Tsuki is a good name for her."

Baku!Osomatsu x Reader

Inspired by shimmering_clouds's prompt.

I weakly opened my eyes to a crawling darkness covering everything I could see, dark shapes shifting about in the far distance as I tried to figure out what kind of forms they were making. Pushing myself up from the ground and glancing around me, I took a few steps back as several dark shapes began to converge nearby, shifting into monstrous figures. A multitude of distorted eyes opened through the darkness, swiveling around until the large red pupils locked onto my still form.

My voice lodged itself into my throat as fear began to claw at my chest, turning around and running from the monstrous humanoids. I cried out in terror as I fell forward, my legs immobilized by something tightly wrapping around them and my chin colliding with the ground. Sharp pain lanced up my legs as I felt several needles pierce through the skin, making me scream as I was lifted up into the air by whatever grappled my legs.

My scream died into a whimper as the figures coalesced into a massive wave of black liquid, surging towards me before crashing over my head.

I stood up with a yelp, taking in deep breaths while staring at several pages of paper underneath my sprawled fingers that were pressed against a wooden surface. A loud band sounded behind me, making me flinch and slowly look back to see a chair haphazardly leaning against a partial wall behind me.

"Ms. (Y/n), I trust that you're able to carry on from where Mr. Raizo left off?" A demanding voice called out from somewhere in front of me, my colored gaze shifting to see a large crowd of people all looking at me. My heart started racing as I heard soft snickering and whispering among the crowd, seeing a single woman standing the furthest away from me with her right hand holding up a small white stick against a tall wall of green.

"I..." I spoke before gathering my thoughts, realizing that I had fallen asleep in the middle of a lecture, "I'm sorry, Professor Choroko...I fell asleep."

A wave of hushed laughter rippled through the crowd of students as I rushed to sit back down, picking up my pencil and quickly scribbling down the notes that were on the blackboard, my head sinking closer to the desk in shame with every passing second.

Professor Choroko continued speaking about unusual types of chemical bonds and the irregularities that each type had, carrying on with the lecture as if nothing had happened. Soon enough, Professor Choroko dismissed the class and the students scrambled to leave the lecture hall quickly while I stayed behind to finish up the last sentence that I thought would be important from the teacher's lecture.

"Ms. (Y/n)," Professor Choroko's voice startled me from my concentration, flinching a little as I realized that she had made it all the way to my seat without me noticing, "This is the sixteenth time that you've fallen asleep in my class."

It wasn't a question or concern with the strict tone she spoke.

"I'm sorry," I lowered my gaze to my paperwork, slowly shoving it into a rough pile before closing the folder over it, "It's been a...rough few months."

"I won't be so forgiving next time," The professor gave a sigh before walking away, "If this class is too difficult for you to pay attention to, you still have a week to drop out of it before you're penalized."

My colored hues darted up to the back of her head, "No, I

need

this class! I'll figure out something so I can stay awake...so please don't kick me out of class!"

"University isn't like that, Ms. (Y/n)," Professor Choroko barely glanced back at me from over her shoulder, "Your own actions will determine how well you do."

I watched as she left the lecture hall, slinging my backpack over my left shoulder and starting the long walk from the university campus to the off-campus apartment building that many students called home. As chemistry was my last class for the day, I didn't want to stay on campus for any longer than necessary...especially when I fell asleep in class. I had already made a fool of myself because of the previous times that I passed out.

I'm not narcoleptic.

I'm plagued by nightmares that have been growing worse as the days wore on, unable to stay asleep for more than an hour or so whenever I tried to sleep naturally. I had tried everything, from sleep studies to over-the-counter sleep aids that were able to make me fall asleep before the nightmares woke me up again.

At first, they had started out simple: a standard fear of meeting new people in a new environment. Something had happened that made the fear grow worse as I settled into the student housing, the nightmares becoming more and more hellish. By the time that I realized it would be a problem, the school semester had already started and the narcoleptic episodes increased.

Unlocking my apartment door, I swung it open and stepped into the darkened studio apartment, not even bothering to turn on the light as I dumped my backpack next to my discarded shoes. Closing the door behind me, I ran a hand through my hair as I groaned, walking through the short hallway to see my messed up bed positioned next to the wall. The glass sliding door and windows were covered with talismans, each one stated to bless the residence with good sleep and fortunate dreams.

"...not like they're doing any good..." I began peeling off the talismans, pursing my lips in frustration as each piece of paper pulled away from the surface they were stuck on, "...I'll just not go to class tomorrow...try to get what sleep I can."

Gathering the talismans into a garbage bag, I tossed the closed bag near the front door and sat down heavily on my bed, "Maybe the internet has better answers..."

Taking out my smartphone from my jeans pocket, I turned on the screen and stretched out on my bed, resting my head on the fluffed-up pillow while typing in keywords that I thought would bring up some kind of helpful hint as to what I needed to do.

"It's the same stuff that I was trying before..." My face shifted into a taut expression, a small knot of frustration growing on my brow as I scrolled through pages of homemade remedies, wingnut experiments of sleep-inducing chants, and 'ye olde wives tales' of narcolepsy cures. My thumb accidently pressed on a link, a groan slipping through my lips as a forum page opened in a new tab on the phone browser. I moved to close it before the headline caught my eye.

'Keep Having Nightmares? Call A Baku!'

A

what

? I hadn't been in Japan for very long, but I hadn't heard of this 'baku' thing.

I cautiously scrolled through the forum page, seeing different people's responses to the headline and raising several questions that other strangers answered further down the page.

A baku was a nightmare-eating yokai that was considered one of the holier yokai in Japanese folklore and was still praised as such by younger kids that would ask a baku to eat any bad dreams they had before falling asleep. My eyebrow raised a little as I opened a new tab in the browser, looking up a prayer that supposedly summoned a baku when I slept.

"

'Baku, come eat my dream'

three times? Is it...really that simple?" I let the hand holding my phone fall to the bed, raising the other hand to press the palm against my forehead, "It's free, so...why not try it?"

The soft sound of chewing woke me up, my eyes fluttering open to see my dark bedroom further darkened by the night sky peering through the glass in the apartment. The heels of my hands pressed against my eyes as I rubbed them to try and wake up a little more before sitting up in bed, slowly realizing that the sound was very familiar to someone chewing on noodles from a broth bowl.

There wasn't any light on in the kitchen area and I was renting this apartment solo, which meant that there was an uninvited guest in my home.

A transparent wisp of fog grabbed my attention as it wafted in front of my eyes, sweeping from left to right. I visually followed the wisp of fog until I saw a dark form huddled near the table next to my bed, the wisp swelling in size as more fog joined into a large stream before swooping down against the table and flowing upwards, disappearing into the dark form.

Another wisp of fog floated up from my right arm, joining the surrounding mist that was being sucked up by the form as yet another foggy wisp pulled itself from my face.

I quickly grabbed the wooden baseball bat propped up near my pillow and swung hard at the dark form, not expecting to feel resistance as the wooden shaft collided with the top portion of the form, nor was I ready for the solid thunk that the impact made.

"Who are you and why are you eating me?!" I scrambled into a batter's position, yelling down at the dark form as it lay sprawled out on the floor. Raising the bat a little higher, I waited for some kind of movement to indicate that the person was still alive.

"Ugh..." The voice was definitely male, making me swing the bat down hard without second-guessing.

I swallowed a scream after the form held out an arm, grabbing the bat tightly mid-swing and refusing to let go as it pressed its other arm against its head. Yanking hard on the bat, I bit down on a plea for the man to let it go so I could protect myself from him.

"You invite me here then immediately attack me when you wake up?" The male ripped the bat from my grip, casually tossing it aside as he sat back up, the fog swirling around him, "That's a bit cruel."

"I did

not

invite you here, you brute! Get out of my apartment!" I grabbed my pillow, using it as a shield between me and the man, "I'll call the police if you don't leave immediately!"

"Lemme just finish the large meal and I'll leave," The table creaked a little as the man leaned his arms against it, "It's been the tastiest thing I've eaten for a while."

The chewing sound started once more as the fog rolled around the man and into his mouth. Screaming as another wisp of fog lifted from my left leg, I slammed the pillow down on his head, "

Stop eating me!!

"

"Will you stop that?!" The man reacted violently, tearing the pillow from my grip and rushing towards me, practically leaping over the table. I felt his hands grab at my wrists and pin them to the bed, the momentum forcing me underneath the man as he settled his weight on top of me, "

You

summoned me here to do a favor for you."

"I told you that I didn't summon you! I never invited you to come inside my apartment," I glared up at the man before sucking in a breath, seeing markings on either side of his jawline. Fear settled in my gut as my mind realized that the man may be a gang member, and I've only heard of horror stories of what gangs did to women that refused them, "Please...I won't tell anyone that you were here...just leave me in peace."

The fog thickened around us as the man remained quiet, the only sound within the apartment being my haggard breathing.

"You've clearly got the wrong idea of what I am," The man's voice was a little more gentle in tone, "Otherwise you wouldn't have attacked me three times."

He released my wrists as he removed himself from the bed, moving over towards the lightswitch and turning on the small lamp near a window. The light spread across the room, illuminating the thick fog and revealing the man in color.

His dark hair was short, cut close to his ears and brushed back haphazardly. The hair color matched the hues in his eyes and his skin tone was light. A red hooded sweatshirt covered his chest and arms while dark blue jeans clothed his legs, his feet wrapped in a pair of white socks. The markings that I saw along his jawline were more prevalent in the light, what I had thought to be gang tattoos were bright yellow stripes that grew thicker in width as the mark neared his mouth.

"See something you like?" His dark eyes held my own as I found myself staring at him.

"I...I just see a guy that is invading my apartment," I huffed as I glanced towards the bat, discarded on the ground just beyond my immediate reach, "Nothing special."

"Ouch, my pride," The man gave a hurt smile while pressing his right hand against his chest, "I'm the baku that you prayed to before falling asleep, so I'm here to eat your nightmares. Name's Osomatsu."

"I don't believe that for a second," My focus shot back to him, "Baku are supposed to be tapir-like and you're clearly a human."

"I didn't want to scare you with how I actually look," The smile spread wide as 'Osomatsu' scratched the back of his head with a hand, the other tucking into the front pocket of the sweatshirt, "You don't look like you're from around here, so I thought that it would be easier for you to think I was human instead of a monster."

"Then prove it. Prove that you're a baku."

"You're not gonna hit me again if I start eating your nightmares, will you?" He dropped to the ground, his legs crossing underneath him. I squinted my eyes and looked at him closely.

"...no."

"Is that a 'no' that means 'no', or does it mean 'I'll wait to see what you do and then I'll make up my mind'?"

"Just fucking do it."

"Got it. Second option," Osomatsu stuffed his other hand into his sweatshirt pocket, closing his eyes and parting his lips slightly.

As he took in a slow and deep breath, the fog began to circle around him once more, swirling into a tighter stream before entering his mouth. Holding my tongue as I saw a thin wisp of fog lift from my left hand, I followed the wisp until it joined with the large collection.

"So...

are

you eating my soul...?"

"I told you that I eat nightmares. More specifically, the one you were having when you were sleeping," Osomatsu barely opened his eyes, looking up towards me with a hooded gaze, "It's a large meal."

"A dream is like food to you..." I continued to watch as the fog barely dissipated, "And you're positive that it's not my soul?"

"I may be a yokai, but I'm not a demon," He closed his eyes once more, "What I'm not understanding is how you let this get so bad. It tastes like it's been fermenting in your head for years."

"There's a taste?" I sniffed at the fog, not smelling anything other than my faded air freshener that I needed to replace.

"Just like everything else does, yes. Now answer the question."

"I moved to Japan from America about six months ago as part of an exchange student program. I'm nervous and shy about meeting new people, but it's never been this bad before."

"This doesn't taste like it's recent," Osomatsu closed his mouth, the fog slowly drifting around him as he opened his eyes wide to look right at me, "I know my nightmares and this one tastes old."

"Years, you said," Watching him give a confirming nod, I turned my head to the side, "The most I can say is that I've always had a fear of meeting new people. I only noticed that it grew much worse after the move."

"Did you want to talk about it?" The baku settled onto my bed next to me, catching me off-guard by how quickly he moved, "I may not look like it, but I'm a great listener."

"No, I don't want to talk about it," I folded my legs close to my chest and backed away from him until my back pressed against the headboard of the bed, "Just...keep eating my nightmare."

"It'll keep coming back until you deal with it."

"Then I'll find someone else to talk to about it, someone who's more qualified than you."

"I'm pretty qualified," His lips stretched into a wide smirk, "I've seen my fair share of nightmares based on being alone and unloved."

"That doesn't mean I want to talk to you about it!"

"Aw, come on..." Osomatsu shifted closer until my toes were pinned underneath his right thigh, leaning in a little to get closer to my face, "The faster you talk, the sooner I'll leave..."

"I don't want to be here. I want to be home where I know people and where people know me," I squeezed my eyes shut, "I'm tired of being tired all the time! I don't want to go to college, and I don't want to be in Japan alone!"

I didn't hear any kind of response from Osomatsu, flexing my toes to still feel him sitting on them before opening my eyes.

He looked ahead of him with a thoughtful look in his hooded eyes, his lips partially open as he ate the fog that had suddenly grown heavier and thicker since I last saw it. Without saying anything, Osomatsu glanced over to me with a tear rolling down his cheek, reaching out to me with his right hand. Hooking his fingers behind my head, the baku pulled me into a side hug while moving his left arm around to fully encompass my torso.

I couldn't find the words to tell him off, shocked that someone like him would even cry at a lame reason for my nightmares. Taking in a breath to excuse myself from his grip, I faltered at the heat Osomatsu was giving off, finding myself returning his hug awkwardly.

My words hung heavily in the air as I heard them bounce around in my head, knowing that most of it was the truth except for one part.

I had no home to go to.

There was no family to return to, no friends to lean on back in America. I had used the last of my inheritance to attend college at one of the top schools in the world for the field I wanted to be in, so I was stuck here until I completed the program just over three years from now.

I didn't realize I was crying until a pitiful sob ripped itself from my throat, the sound smothered by Osomatsu's sweatshirt. He continued to hold me

gently as I kept crying, losing all sense of time as his body warmth seeped into me.

A soft noise in my kitchen woke me up, my eyes opening to see the plain white ceiling above me. Covering my mouth to stifle a yawn, I sat up in my bed and looked over to see someone leaning over the stovetop, fiddling with something before standing up straight and looking back towards me.

"No nightmare?" The face of Osomatsu greeted me, his arms and shoulders bare as a white tank top covered his chest.

"No...none at all," A spot of red drew my attention down to myself, finding the red sweatshirt draped over my chest like a blanket. I quickly pulled it off of me and folded it haphazardly, "Sorry about this..."

"No worries," He laughed as he walked closer to the bed, holding out a steaming mug to me after sitting next to me again, "Here. I raided your kitchen when I sensed you waking up and made you some warmed milk. It's supposed to help calm you down."

I cautiously took the mug between my hands, the chilled fingers warming up immediately on the more-than-warm ceramic, "Thanks."

"After you finish, I'll clean up the mess I made and leave."

"Actually," I hesitated while reaching out to him, my intent to touch his forearm before I stopped myself.

Osomatsu slightly raised an eyebrow at the motion, "You wanted me gone as soon as you saw me, so I thought this would be best."

"I've heard that...college can be really stressful," I looked up at him cautiously, seeing a faint smirk tug at the corner of his lips, "I was...hoping that you'd stay? So my nightmares don't get worse again."

"You could always call another baku to help you," The smirk widened as Osomatsu brought his mug up to his lips.

"I don't want another baku," I screwed my eyes shut, "I want you!"

There was a heavy silence before I opened my eyes a little, seeing Osomatsu look straight at me with a kind smile.

"I happen to have an empty schedule at the moment and don't really have plans to go anywhere..." A satisfied look crossed his face, "If you want me to stay, then I have nowhere else to be."

Noir!Osomatsu x Reader

Inspired by shimmering_clouds' prompt.

I sank into the driver seat of my car, both hands clutching the steering wheel for dear life despite the vehicle not running. Licking my upper lip nervously, I glanced down into the footwell of the passenger seat to spy the inconspicuous black bag that was shoved out of sight behind my purse.

'You

know

what he's going to ask, (y/n)...'

I mentally berated myself, letting my hands fall from the steering wheel before picking up the smartphone that sat in a cup holder, '

...so why did you even stop in that store?!'

I scrolled through my phone contacts until a familiar name rolled up through the screen, hesitantly pressing it before I heard the call try to connect.

"Hey, babydoll."

I shuddered a little at the new nickname that the speaker had decided to start calling me, unsure if I liked it or not, "Hey, Todomatsu. I, uhh...I'm driving back home from my shopping trip, if you were still thinking of coming over."

"Oh, sure," I could hear someone else speaking near him on the other side, but couldn't make out the words, "Listen, I have something to do real quick and then I'll be on my way."

"Sounds good," A small wave of relief washed through my system as I quietly slid my car key into the ignition, "I'll get dinner ready for us."

"Sounds good, babydoll," Without waiting for a 'goodbye', Todomatsu hung up the call. I pulled the phone away from my ear before staring at the screen, my brow creasing a little with uncertainty.

"Todomatsu..." I softly uttered his name before shaking my head in disapproval. Todomatsu was my boyfriend and he had promised me that he would be honest with whatever we talked about. I knew that I had trust issues, especially after I found out that my first boyfriend had been seeing someone else while I was considered his 'side chick', but Todomatsu knew about this...

No, he said that he had something quick to finish before he'd be on his way. I shook the recent pet name from my head, my hurt mind trying to twist it into an excuse that he was cheating on me before I turned over the engine and shifted the car into gear.

With the groceries meant for dinner tonight sitting in the trunk, I began to drive home.

After ensuring that everything was in its place -- including my new surprise tucked away in my closet -- I patiently waited for my boyfriend to arrive, passing the time by reading a book. My meager apartment wasn't lavish by anyone's standards, but the simple one-bedroom apartment was more than enough for me.

The kitchen had a small eating area right next to it, the table decorated with some of Todomatsu's favorite flowers as the freshly made food sat in vented containers to ensure that they were still warm by the time he arrived.

Every time I heard someone walk outside the apartment, I set the book down expectantly and waited for the door to open. This happened quite a few times before I realized that it was almost two hours after he usually

stopped by, the book closing gently in my hands as I reached for my phone resting on the arm of the chair I was sitting in.

As I scrolled through my contacts to call Todomatsu to make sure that he was okay, I heard the front door knob turn, quickly looking to the front door to see Todomatsu hobble into the apartment.

"Todomatsu!" I cried out as I stood, the book and phone falling from my hands as I rushed over to him.

He looked awful. His dark eyes lifted up to meet mine before dropping back to the floor as he reached down to take off his shoes, slightly revealing the developing bruises on his face and neck. Todomatsu's bright pink shirt was crumpled, like it had been grabbed over and over in a fight, while his light tan pants bore dirt stains.

"It's nothing to worry over, (y/n)," Todomatsu dismissed his condition as if it was nothing, kicking off his left shoe with a frustrated look on his face before glancing back up at me, "Mind if I use your shower and washer?"

"Uhh -- sure," I let him go as he calmly walked through one of the doors in the hallway, revealing a small bathroom, "Should I heat up the food?"

"Sure."

I flinched at his nonchalant answer, noting the large departure from the last time I saw him. His attitude had completely turned around, acting like I was some kind of stop before he went to his real destination instead of being the loving and doting boyfriend that he had been for the past year.

I waited patiently by the stovetop as I reheated the prepared food, partially closing my eyes before I heard my phone emit a soft chime to notify me of a new message. With the night growing deeper around 7 p.m., I raised an eyebrow as I picked my phone up from the counter.

The number wasn't registered to my contact list, but the message that it had sent asked if Todomatsu was with me.

<

Who is this?

>

<

Let him stay the night there with you. His older brother is furious.

>

I stared at the screen with a blush deepening on my cheeks before I shook my head and sent back a reply, <

He's only here to have dinner. He didn't bring anything else.

>

<

Please, (y/n). Just tell Todomatsu that Choromatsu ordered him to stay.

>

I blinked at the name. Todomatsu had only mentioned a 'Choromatsu' once when we started dating, complaining about how uptight his older brothers were and how much of a pain Choromatsu was when they worked together. I still didn't know what Todomatsu did for a living, but I never really asked about it.

"Thanks, sweetcheeks," I internally flinched at the new pet name, "I really needed that. Is dinner ready yet?"

I slowly put the phone down on the counter before offering Todomatsu a smile, "Yeah, it just finished reheating. I'll bring it to the table."

"Nice," He returned my gesture with his own smile, partially closing his eyes before giving his dark brown hair a final rub with the towel, tossing it

onto the back of his chair, "Smells like...some kind of steak?"

"Close," I laughed a little as I brought the food out one by one in their containers, "I thought that a simple meal would be better for us, so I made hamburg steak with seared veggies and a small fruit salad."

"Sounds good, babydoll," Todomatsu's smile widened as he grabbed his serving when I sat down across from him, "It's been a while since you made this."

I slightly paused in reaching for my own serving, my smile faltering as he happily helped himself while thanking me for making the food that I had

never

made for him before. Todomatsu didn't catch the confused look I gave him before I shook my head to reset my expression.

"...I wanted to make something simple since we've both been so busy with work."

"Well, it's delicious regardless, (y/n)," He went for another serving after a long moment of silence, his eyes quickly holding my gaze as he plated another hamburg steak, "You...haven't been seeing someone else, right?"

"What do you mean?" My brow furrowed in confusion before looking towards my phone that still sat on the kitchen counter, "If you mean earlier, I got a few texts from Choromatsu--"

"You're talking with Choromatsu?" The utensils in his hands were slammed down onto the table, Todomatsu cutting me off before I could ask about the messages I was supposed to relay.

"No, I--" I tried to explain myself calmly, seeing his happy expression quickly morph into an angry mask, "Todomat--"

"I thought you were the one that had trust issues, (y/n)," His words silenced my tongue, "I guess we never had something special between us."

I was left speechless as he shoved himself away from the table, my mind snapping back to reality as I scrambled after him as he sauntered towards the front door, still wearing his borrowed clothes.

"No, Todomatsu! He was just trying to--"

"Get in your pants?" He wheeled back on me faster than I could anticipate, confusion and heartbreak swelling in my mind as I noticed the same pattern from my first ex, "I thought that you were going to be the one for me, (y/n). It turns out that you're just like the rest of the sluts out there, only wanting me for my money."

"Money? I don--"

"We're done."

My voice faltered as Todomatsu opened the front door, glaring at me from over his shoulder, "What...?"

"To think I gave you a year..." He shook his head with finality as the door closed behind him, "...what a waste."

I had tried to explain myself to Todomatsu in the following days, sometimes coming across him as I wandered the street or going to where he said his house was with intentions to wait out front, ultimately stopping when he made it painfully obvious that I wasn't his girlfriend anymore by kissing the women he was walking with whenever I tried to approach him.

I gave up after the third dismissal.

"--sure, babydoll," Todomatsu cheerfully smiled as he held up his phone to his ear, "Tomorrow night sounds like a good time."

The response on the other end was muffled by his giggling, playfully responding with more nicknames that he universally applied to every woman he talked with.

The noises drew the attention of the only other occupant in the room, their brow furrowing in frustration as they lowered the disassembled pistol onto the organized table in front of them.

"See you then," The youngest brother cut off the call before his eyes glanced over to the person glaring at him, "Fucking

what

."

"Just wondering if you got my message about a week ago," The person partially returned their attention back to the pistol, the silver muzzle flash catching their eye as they picked it up to inspect it before cleaning it, "I left it with your girlfriend."

"Nope," The response was flippant as Todomatsu leaned back in the high back chair, bringing the smartphone up to his face as his fingers tapped away on the screen, "She was busy being a whiny bitch."

"For some reason, I don't see that happening."

"No, it's true. You should've seen her face when I told her that she was being too clingy and I wanted to be free."

"Todomatsu, have you seen--" A third voice cut in from the hallway as the large double doors of the sitting room were pushed open, drawing both of their attention as a man walked in wearing a white tank top shirt that was barely tucked into the blue jeans adorning his legs. The newcomer cut himself off when he looked at the person cleaning their pistol, "Choromatsu, we need to head out."

"Already?" Choromatsu sighed as he quickly assembled his pistol, pulling the slide back into place with a 'click' before slipping it into the waist holster tucked inside the waistband of his pants, pulling the jacket over the slight bulge to hide the weapon from prying eyes, "Sorry, Osomatsu. I thought it was supposed to be a bit later."

"Karamatsu bumped up the patrol time because he and Jyushimatsu have been noticing other people wandering where they're not wanted," Osomatsu rested a hand on his hip, looking back towards Todomatsu, "Something I thought

you

were supposed to be looking out for."

"Fuck off," The youngest brother snarled, turning away from both of his older brothers as he continued to play with his phone, "If I allow you to have your 'off' days, then you need to allow me mine."

"So says the boss of this family," Choromatsu sighed, his eyes closing before looking at Osomatsu, "Ready?"

"Just let me grab my jacket and I'll be good to go," The eldest gave a thumbs up as he walked out the sitting room.

"Have you noticed anything strange about our youngest brother recently?"

The red jacket flaps fluttered in the wind as the eldest brother walked alongside the questioner, his styled hair moving how the gel allowed, "You're gonna have to be more specific."

"I mean," The other man partially rolled his eyes as his hands tucked into the pockets of his long green jacket, the camouflage-patterned collar tugged by the same breeze as a light mist of breath rolled from his mouth with every word, "He's been actively going out with his other girls and talking about you-know-who less. For someone who claimed that she was just a spur-of-the-moment fling, he seems to be acting like a petulant child about whatever happened between the two of them."

"Is that a bad thing?" The older of the two let out a long sigh, the condensation streaming out thick as the wind grabbed his hot breath, "Choromatsu, we've all done that."

"Maybe, but not to this degree. As far as I knew, he and (y/n) were happy together."

"She was his seventh 'girlfriend'. Our troublesome little boss tends to revolve through girls faster than I do," Osomatsu's lips tugged into a smirk.

"You've

never

had a girlfriend," Choromatsu dug his hands into the pockets a little deeper as his dark gaze shot back to the older brother, his own hands lifting up to behind his head as he gave a shrug.

"Neither have you."

"I don't

want

one," His dark hues flicked back to the sidewalk in front of the pair, "Too much baggage and more than enough hassle in our line of work."

"Because of the chance she could be kidnapped?"

"Because of the constant whining that could happen when we're away for days at a time," Choromatsu quickly retorted, "You could think of the perfect woman and I'd still say 'no' to her because that patience eventually breaks down. I'd rather not have an ultimatum thrown at me over a relationship."

"What about if she knew about your job?" Osomatsu lowered his hands and slightly leaned forward to catch the younger's gaze, a knowing smirk on his face.

"That depends on--" Choromatsu started before cutting himself off, his eyes widening a little as his pace slightly slowed, "Is that...?"

Osomatsu looked straight ahead on the sidewalk, his focus narrowing in on what Choromatsu had seen.

To see his youngest brother's most recent ex-girlfriend wandering towards their home was a slight surprise, a small paper bag clasped between her hands. With her head hung low, the two brothers only watched as she slowly made her way up the sidewalk towards them.

"(Y/n)?" Choromatsu asked softly when she walked between them without acknowledgement.

"(Y/n)?"

I flinched at my name being said, looking around to see two identical men staring back at me, completely walking past them without registering their presence. My eyes widened in partial recognition, the dark olive green color of one man's coat mirroring a picture that Todomatsu had shown me a while ago.

"Choro...matsu?" I turned around to fully face them, hastily rubbing my eyes with the heel of a palm to wipe away some sudden tears, "I'm sorry that I didn't see you there."

"Everything okay?" The two pairs of dark eyes that stared at me only reminded me of Todomatsu, my heart beginning to throb as my fingers clutched the paper bag -- the last gift meant for Todomatsu. I had figured that since I was moving out of the area, it would be better to anonymously drop the piece of lingerie at his house with a note stating that it was for Todomatsu to do with as he saw fit. I didn't want to bring it with me because I knew that I wasn't going to look for another partner.

Romance was overrated, anyway.

"(Y/n), you date our youngest brother, right?" The man wearing the red jacket gently asked, both of his hands tucked into the pockets as he

remained where he stood. Choromatsu glanced back at him before turning his focus towards me, waiting for my answer as well.

"

Dated

, yes..." I gave a slow nod, "He broke it off about two weeks ago, so we're...not seeing each other anymore."

"Ah, shit," He pulled back a little like I had thrown a punch at his face, "Sorry to hear that."

"No, it's all right," Quickly shaking my head, I raised a hand to tuck back some loose hair behind one of my ears, "I mean, if you're not happy in a relationship, then it's best to stop forcing yourself to act like it, right?"

Both men looked at each other before Choromatsu sighed, "Fine, I'll take care of the walk."

"Thanks," The other man gave a wide grin as he watched Choromatsu continue to stroll down the street, waiting until both of us were alone. I took a few steps away from the red-dressed man nervously as he focused back on me.

"Can...I help you with something?"

"Yeah," His smirk widened a little bit, "You can relax. I'm not gonna bite."

His hands slipped out of the jacket's pockets, motioning for me to follow him towards the nearby sitting area. I did so at a large distance, unsure about who exactly this brother was and unwilling to immediately trust him just because he was related to Todomatsu or Choromatsu. He sat down on one of the open benches with a loud sigh, throwing his feet out after sitting down and crossing one leg over the other.

"Let's start with introductions. My name is Osomatsu and I'm the eldest sextuplet of my little family. I'm loud, rude, obnoxious, and I really like to gamble by way of pachinko or horse racing," He placed a hand on his chest

as he spoke, lifting it off and offering an open palm towards me like he was telling me it was my turn.

"I...uh," Picking a seat that was far enough from him, I tucked the paper bag right next to me as I averted my gaze to the ground near his feet, "My name is (y/n) and I'm...moving in a few days."

"What?! Why?" Osomatsu nearly jumped out of his seat, leaning forward in shock.

"I don't really have anything left here..." I looked away from his feet, quickly focusing on a line of ants that had found some dried fruit left by someone earlier in the day, "I figured that it's best to get a new start somewhere where...there isn't heartbreak at almost every turn."

"(Y/n), you don't have to move to get a new start," His voice softened a little, "You can always make new memories over the old ones."

"Suggesting yourself?" I lightly scoffed, refraining from rolling my eyes at the obvious set up.

"No."

The denial was faster than I thought possible, Osomatsu sounding certain of the two letters. My colored hues moved over to look up at him, seeing his relaxed form now scrunched in a thoughtful posture as his right hand was palmed over his mouth, his familiar dark eyes boring right into my own.

"No, not at all," He repeated the answer as if I doubted he was the one to say it, "I'm not the kind of guy to steal someone right after a bad breakup. I don't like the people that use that pain for their own advantage."

The words hung heavy in the air, nestling deep within my chest as I fought to not show sorrow despite the tears already pricking at the corners of my eyes.

"Osomatsu, you don't understand," I struggled to say anything without a waver in my voice, "It wasn't a bad break up between Todomatsu and I. He

called it off be-because of a misunderstanding...!"

I begged myself to not say any more to a brother that I just met and

definitely

not about what happened that night.

"I had only messaged Choromatsu a few times when he asked me where Todomatsu was, but I never got the chance to give him Choromatsu's message before he exploded in my face and claimed that I was

sleeping

with his brother...! He doesn't let me speak whenever I see him to try and explain what happened...I can't take it anymore!"

My hands partially ran through my hair before grabbing fistfuls of the colored locks, the strain hurting less than the heartache dwelling within my chest as tears fell freely onto my lap as I leaned over. I wanted to crawl into a hole, to disappear from the city so that I couldn't bother anyone else ever again.

I didn't even register the hug someone was giving me until the crying had slowed down, the blubbering a partial muffled mess as I clung to a red jacket. I felt a pair of arms around my back, pressing me close as I regained control of myself.

"I'm right here for you, (y/n). I'll always listen to what you have to say, even if it seems insignificant."

>>===¤

Six Months Later

¤====<<

"Of course, babycakes," Todomatsu puckered his lips a little as he held the phone close to his ear. A scoff from the doorway drew his ire as the soft

look in his eyes shifted into a furious glare, meeting a pair of identical dark hues lancing the glare right back at him.

"I'm heading out for the night," Osomatsu didn't give his youngest brother much time to react, shouldering the red jacket and walking past the open doorway.

"Fuck off," Todomatsu shouted towards the hall before his voice softened again, "Oh, not to you, angel. Unless you're interested--"

Osomatsu slammed the front door closed as he took in a deep breath, looking up at the early night sky for a brief moment before heading out towards his destination with hopes of picking something up on the way.

I sat nervously on the couch as I waited for Osomatsu to arrive at my apartment. He had convinced me to not move away right after Todomatsu called off our relationship, giving me his phone number and promising that he'd always return any call he missed from me. He was a man of his word and returned every single one of them when he was able to, apologizing for his business getting in the way of our 'lovely little talks'.

"Knock, knock."

"Osomatsu, come on in!" I gently closed the book I was reading to pass the time, not expecting him to arrive so early, "Food still has another few minutes, so make yourself at home."

"It smells good," He took off his shoes and hung up his jacket in the hall before making his way towards the common room and eyeing the set dining table, "Last I checked, the birthday girl isn't supposed to do anything on her birthday. She's supposed to be pampered and adored by all who attend the party."

"Well, I've never been one for flashy birthday parties..." I nervously laughed as I stood up from the couch, setting the book down and holding out my arms to him. Osomatsu instantly closed the distance and gave me a warm

hug, enveloping me in his arms as I tried to return the gesture, "It's so good to see you."

"You, too, bestie," He winked as he pulled away, letting his arms drop before a look of remembrance crossed his face, "Ah, that's right! Stay here -- I've got something for you."

"You didn't need to bring anything, Osomatsu," I broke his order as I moved to the kitchen to check on the food, ensuring that nothing was burnt. The hamburg steak was ready to be pulled while the veggies had another minute or so before they were finished, my attention moving to the fruit salad sitting on the counter.

"I know I didn't," Osomatsu's voice curled around the corner of the kitchen before moving closer to me, "But I thought that I'd make this birthday a bit more special."

My heart fluttered a little before I firmly reminded myself that we weren't in

that

kind of relationship. There were a lot of times where I wished we were, but I didn't want to treat Osomatsu like he was just a rebound boyfriend.

No, he deserved much more than that.

I calmly turned around and saw a small bouquet of flowers in his left hand while holding a medium-sized box in his right hand, the wrapping a shade of my favorite color.

"Oh, wow," I gasped lightly and took both items from him, "Want me to open it after dinner?"

"Preferably," Osomatsu rubbed his index finger underneath his nose as a playful smirk spread his lips wide, "Think of it as a dessert of sorts."

"Well, dinner is ready to go," Placing the present on the countertop, I grabbed the oven mitt and reached down to open the oven door before Osomatsu leaned over me and pulled the glove from my hand.

"Go get yourself ready, Ms. I'm-Still-Dressed-For-My-Job."

"Ah," I looked down at my office wear, standing back up as a light dusting of red covered my cheeks, "I didn't even notice."

Shuffling to my bedroom and closing the door behind me, I started taking off the suit jacket and unbuttoning the white shirt underneath. The closet door was propped open like I had tried to get undressed earlier but became caught up in something else, letting me grab the hangar needed for the outfit and gently put it away. As I looked through the closet for something else to wear, my eyes fell on an older paper bag, the mouth curled up and the whole thing shoved into place haphazardly.

I knew what was in the bag -- the lingerie that I had bought for...

My heart pounded like crazy as I picked up the bag, unfurling the mouth and pulling out the white lingerie bra and panty set, the sheer fabric of the babydoll bra draping down to just below my thighs. I entertained the thought of putting it on for laughs, maybe even showing it to Osomatsu as a way to cope with the hurt that happened that day.

"You can always make new memories over the old ones."

My hand tightened around the hangar hook before I took the lingerie off of the thing, laying them out on my bed as I scrambled to find non-suggestive clothing to wear over it. Here I was, six months into a close friendship with Osomatsu, and I was about to show him something that could possibly change the relationship.

I slowed my search for clothes, pulling out a pair of sweatpants and eyeing the panties laying on the bed.

I've never been more confident about myself in my life, thanks to Osomatsu. I want to show him what he's done for me, but if he shoves me away because of it...then I'll salvage what I can from our friendship.

Osomatsu looked for the serving utensils as he set down the salad bowl on the dining table, finding them already set out and placing them in the

appropriate food items.

"Sorry for the wait," (Y/n) called out from her bedroom, "Could I ask you something?"

"Sure, ask away," He turned to face her, slightly concerned at the beet red color of her cheeks but ultimately paying attention to her words.

"We're...close friends, right?" She made her way towards the dining table, her hands fiddling with the hem of the oversized shirt she threw on.

"Of course," Osomatsu answered in a calm tone, his mind already connecting some of the dots that he was picking up from her behavior.

"Is there...Would you..." (Y/n) seemed frustrated with something he couldn't see, biting her bottom lip harshly before meeting his curious gaze, "Would you be upset with me if I said that I was interested in you as something more?"

Silence filled the distance between them, Osomatsu blinking a few times to gather his thoughts.

He wasn't expecting

that

from her. Maybe a confession that she was thinking about Todomatsu again, or that she had found someone special at work...but

him?!

"Uhh..."

"Nevermind," (Y/n) quickly shook her head as her fingers choked the fabric of her shirt, "It was a dumb question. Let's eat."

"Are you willing to hear my answer anyway?" Osomatsu intercepted her moving to one of the set places, his hand out but not touching her shoulder. (Y/n) backed up a little in surprise before nodding slowly.

Osomatsu took a deep breath in before looking directly at her.

Yes, it was true that he had an urge to do more intimate things with her ever since he realized who she was, but that was the arrogant part of him wanting to hold something over his little brother's head. Osomatsu had gotten to know the real (y/n) -- the one that Todomatsu hadn't even spoken about -- and he

adored

every aspect of her. The way she smiled when she received an unexpected gift, the few times that she let out her real laugh with only him to hear it, and the moments that were quiet when she was having a rough day.

He loved it.

He loved

her

, yet he held himself back because he thought she didn't want to have anything to do with him or his family beyond a friendship.

But here (y/n) was, practically asking if it was okay to allow the relationship to grow further than just this.

Osomatsu steeled himself as he looked back at her, her shoulders shaking a little with nervousness.

"I'm not upset with you at all, (y/n). I just wasn't expecting you to ask that. There have been times where I did think about trying out a deeper relationship with you, but I pulled back because I was scared that I'd chase you away if I told you," He could see the realization in her eyes, "If that's where you'd like this relationship to go, then let's give it a try. I'm not going to force you into anything that you're not ready for, just like I did when we were friends, okay?"

The beet red blush had somehow deepened and traveled up to her ears, her hands trying to furiously hide the flustered expression on her face as she

nodded in response. Osomatsu wasn't sure if he needed to hug her or not, but his answer came when she rushed towards him, throwing her arms around his torso. He instantly responded with his own hug, feeling her heart beat a thousand miles a minute.

Osomatsu smiled as his hands rubbed her back lightly, "Now, let's eat this dinner before it gets cold, birthday girl."

(Y/n) nodded as she sniffed, "Right...sorry."

"No need to be," He helped her into her chair, "It smells wonderful, by the way."

"It's only my second time making this, so I'm sorry if it tastes bad."

"It'll taste great, I can tell," Osomatsu sent a reassuring smile her way. He wasn't going to ask why she was wearing

something else

underneath that loose clothing -- she'd tell him about it when she was ready.

Naga!Osomatsu x Pregnant!Reader

Inspired by ILoveWolvezz 's prompt.

Extended Naga family:

Oso - none

Kara - daughter, Juniper

Choro - son, Moss

Ichi - daughter, Fortune

Jyushi - twins (son and daughter), Salt and Herb

Todo - twins (sons), Ghost and Specter

Something was off with Oso.

I didn't need to have the nagas' senses to fully understand that.

Every time that I left his territory to spend time with another mate and their offspring, I could feel his resentment at my back.

No one had answers for me when I had previously asked what was going on with the eldest, most of the brothers shying away from the question to focus on something else that was less demanding of their attention.

Until I was supposed to travel to Kara's territory.

Oso's arms wrapped around my shoulders tightly as he pressed the bridge of his nose into the side of my neck, my face flushing from both the sudden contact and the intimate closeness I suddenly found myself in.

"Oso?" I could barely move, his long tail wrapping over itself as my legs became pinned within his coils, "Hey...I kinda need those."

"...don't go."

The unexpected tenderness of his voice caught me off guard, drawing my full attention as I stilled within his grip, "Why not?"

"You'll be ignored by the others again," His breath was hot on my skin, goosebumps prickling near my shoulder before a shiver raced down my spine at the contrast of his cooler temperature against mine.

"You mean...they've been refusing to do anything with me because...you told them not to?"

His fingers dug into my skin, his brow furrowing out of the corner of my eye, "I didn't ask them to. In fact, I stated the opposite."

As if realizing he was almost hurting me, his hands relaxed and gripped my shirt instead, pulling me ever closer to his chest.

"They seem to think that I'm pitiful without a child."

The disgusted tone he used caught my attention, "Why would they think that? You've been working the hardest among us to find a new home to support the expanding family; swimming in the ocean for some days on end, staying on whatever island you find to ensure it's hospitable for us, and coming back home with your findings."

I lifted my hands to rest on his, our fingers intertwining.

"...Of the six of us, I was the one who wanted to have a child with you the most; to have someone binding us together beyond our coupling, to help take care of someone with your flesh and blood."

"Your brothers' children can be treated as your own, Oso," Pressing my cheek against his forehead, I met his gaze as the naga lifted his head from my neck, "I mean...I'm suddenly the mother of seven nagas and the mate of their fathers. I'm sure--"

"You don't understand, (y/n)," Oso's black-and-red hues turned dark, pulling away completely from me as he moved towards the vast field of maiden grass, the emerald green shifting to a withered tan as the colder weather crept in, "I won't put you through

that

again."

That...?

"My pregnancy?" My shoulders felt colder without his touch.

The icy glance over his shoulder was the only answer Oso offered.

He slowed his gliding gate, the long tail coiling up underneath him as his torso partially leaned forward in defeat, speaking quietly after a long period of silence, "Nature is the only rule we follow: if it was supposed to happen, then it would. You didn't give birth to my own, and I hated seeing you in so much pain while your belly swelled with my brothers' children. They, however, wanted me to lay with you regardless of what I wanted."

I lowered my gaze to the shorter grass underneath my worn boots, thinking back to when any show of love I offered the other nagas had been physically rebuked without reason: Kara turning his head away from my kiss, Choro lifting himself into a tree when I offered a hug, Jyushi verbally stammering an excuse about his twins when I asked to lay on him like I had previously, Ichi became more of a recluse about physical contact, and Todo returned nothing, always fretting about his twins inheriting his paralytic gaze.

I understood the pressure Oso was feeling, albeit not in the same circumstances.

The other five naga brothers wanted Oso to be happy like they were, but he had survived his whole life living by nature's rule.

Oso curled in on himself, leaning fully forward and nearly falling to the ground as I barely heard a soft sound -- a hiccup, of sorts.

His shoulders were shaking.

Wordlessly, I moved closer to him and lightly rested a hand on his heaving back, kneeling next to him for a moment before he flung himself at me. His arms wrapped around my back, fingers clinging to my shirt as momentum pushed us onto the ground. Oso's head rested next to mine, his cheek pressing into my own as I returned the desperate hug.

His lengthy tail did not encircle us.

"What am I to do, (y/n)?" Oso's words were thick with sorrow, hot liquid running down his cheeks as he struggled to take a deep breath, "When you come back to me, you're covered in joyful and happy scents from the others...when you leave me, I only feel despair!"

I couldn't say anything, desperately wishing that I could.

Here was Oso -- the eldest naga who used his cunning to save his brothers while imprisoned at the zoo, the very same naga who ferociously fought against those threatening to harm his family -- crying helplessly for something he truly desired but forced himself to not obtain because it would affect

me

.

His tears trailed down to my shirt as I continued to hold him, gently lifting a hand to run through his red hair. The strands felt just as soft as they did years ago when I first touched them at the zoo, my eyes hooding in memory while Oso calmed down.

"What have I done to deserve you as a mate..."

I hummed quietly in amusement, "Would it surprise you if I said 'nothing'?"

The eldest naga let out a long sigh, "...not at all."

"Then, you've done nothing to deserve me. I am a gift from the universe to you," I stuck my tongue out playfully as his vivid hues looked up to me in our prone position, "And as your gift, I want to bring you as many smiles as I can while I'm by your side."

A hum of his own rumbled within his throat, his torso shifting up a little so our lips were almost touching, "I'd like that very much, (y/n)."

I obliged his invitation, pressing my lips against his in a deep kiss. Oso only rolled over while pulling me on top of him, maintaining contact before relaxing his neck to let his head rest against the ground. My legs straddled his upper waist, the repaired shorts allowing skin to touch skin-and-scale, while my hands pressed against his shoulders to keep myself propped up.

"Are you okay with this?" The words left my mouth in a hushed tone, taken back by the tender expression on the krait naga's face. Oso was the one naga that

never

freely allowed me to sit on top when we coupled, always taking control and domineering his will onto my body. He had always made it clear that while we had sex -- I would never have the option to change positions.

Oso's answer was another deep kiss, his tongue curling around my own as his fingers barely brushed against my upper arms. The hands that usually stretched out my clothing in a mating frenzy never touched the material.

I pulled away from the kiss, fully sitting up and moving back off of his waist with a worried look, "No, Oso...I need an answer from you. This is different."

"Does different need to be negative?" He remained laying on the grass, shifting his arms above his head as the red-and-black hues hooded in my direction, "If you're my gift, then I want to experience you in a new way --

to fully appreciate you as my mate. I've always taken from you; now, I want you to take from me."

I expected his tail to grab me from behind, for his passive display to switch into an aggressive position when I had my guard down.

Nothing happened in the seconds I held my breath.

Tentatively, I moved back onto his waist, letting my hands brush up his bare chest to feel the scales that emerged and disappeared near his shoulders in a small mantle-like pattern, "Even if this results in another pregnancy...?"

A knowing smirk tugged at his lips, his eyes closing as if reveling in my touch. When they opened, the cold calculating desire swirled in the deep pools of red.

Nature's rule.

True to his word, Oso didn't dominate the coupling despite freely participating in the positions I asked him to do. He was gentle at my command and obliging when I begged for more, always remaining subservient.

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Three Months Later

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Todo released my hand when he made sure that I was secure in my newly completed den, the straw bed fresh as his twin sons remained nearby. My belly had swelled once more -- not as terrible as the first time, thankfully, but still enough where the skin was taut and the size barring me from doing most activities I would normally do without issue.

"Momma," The oldest twin gently touched my forehead with his hand, "Do you need water?"

"Is this a good spot for you?" The other echoed the first's sentiment, the younger twin somewhat smaller than his brother. They were never far apart from each other, the younger hiding behind the older without fail.

"This is good for now," I let out a sigh while a smile pulled at my lips, my right hand reaching out and cupping the older's cheek, "Ghost, I would love to try some water."

He smiled, pulling away from my reach and moving towards the clay water dish resting near the entrance to the hollow tree stump. The place I had previously picked for living had collapsed into the marshland when I wasn't inside, Todo nearly slipping into madness as he berated me and himself for choosing such a location.

The father moved a little closer, the back of his hand resting on my forehead as concern fell on his expression, "(Y/n)...you're burning up."

"It was the same when I was first pregnant," I offered a small hum, my eyes catching the twins coming back with the bowl and water rag hanging over the edge.

Ghost, the oldest twin, was a near-perfect image of Todo. His hair was a bit longer, partially held back with a braid that his brother always fashioned.

The younger, Specter, barely looked out from Ghost's shadow, his burnt orange eyes catching mine for a moment between pitch black locks of hair. Where bright pink was prominent on Todo and Ghost, the color had deepened into a darker shade of pink on Specter. His human half was completely devoid of scales, the boy choosing to grow out his hair to hide his face in some form of disguise to compliment the others' mask-like scales.

The naga children had named themselves after hearing a few of my stories.

I found it endearing that they picked names that aligned with their innate abilities.

"Thank you, Ghost," I gently took the water-soaked rag and brought it to my lips, sucking in what moisture it held slowly. Dipping the near-empty rag once more, I looked towards Todo as he tucked his tail around the straw bed, "Any word?"

"Besides Oso's absolute panic?" He gazed down at me, taking pleasure in seeing me in such a state again, "No."

"Will they be boys?" Ghost lightly poked my distended stomach, the action going unheeded before Todo hissed. Both boys recoiled back, retreating outside before a searing pain ripped through my waist, echoing through my legs and back.

I smothered the shocked scream with both hands, not wanting to terrify the kids further. Todo instantly gathered me in his arms, the flecks of amber deep within his hues catching the sunlight as I found myself outside. I forced myself to relax within his arms, fully knowing that he was following what I had asked of the naga fathers should this happen within their territories.

There was a high possibility that the children I now bore belonged to Oso and, as such, I wanted them to be born within his part of the island. While I had laid with Jyushi and Kara a few weeks after I locked with Oso multiple times, I took precautions to ensure that there was no vaginal penetration.

The sun had moved halfway across the sky when Todo released his grip on me, my legs laying on a flat surface while my back was propped up against something warm.

"You're sure you took extra care?"

"For sun's sake, Oso," What I was leaning against moved in time with an exhale, "Either go away or help your mate!"

"My flower," Kara's voice cut through the shouting match filling the air, his bronze colored eyes capturing my attention from the listless daze I had somehow slipped into. The viper naga leaned close to me, his arms reaching

past me while I became distracted from the youngest and eldest naga brothers pitching a fit for some reason, "Are you comfortable?"

I barely nodded before another wave of pain radiated from my waist, clenching my teeth at the sudden agony and bracing myself. The contractions were ebbing shorter and shorter while lingering for longer.

"...I think I'm close..." I shuddered as something writhed within my womb, drawing a strangled gasp.

"Todo, take over," Kara barked out orders as he pulled away from my line of sight, the youngest naga holding my gaze as a new welt appeared on his left cheek, "Oso, gather yourself or leave. Your panic will not help here."

"How can I gather myself when I smell blood

that's not (y/n)'s

?" The presumed father hissed in anger, Todo pulling away enough for me to catch a glimpse of the pacing red-headed krait naga.

Oso was a mess.

His hair was tousled so much that it made Ichi's hairstyle look tame in comparison, the blood red color catching the afternoon sunlight in the partially shaded grove. Grass had been smoothed to the dirt from his constant slithering, no longer able to stand up like the other blades near the grove's edge. Oso's scales bore signs of shedding, the dull red near his waist muted against the pale black scales along the length of his tail.

Kara physically confronted Oso, creating a physical wall that forced the eldest to stop moving without touching him, "Please...go soak."

"Not in a thousand moons," The suggestion was rebuked with defiance, both nagas nearly hissing with every breath.

"(Y/n), look at me."

Todo enraptured my attention once more, his hands holding my own as another wave of pain -- much worse than the others -- ripped through my womb. A scream of agony pulled itself from my throat, hot tears beginning to streak down my face as I clung to Todo.

Something was

wrong

.

The scream turned into an unfiltered yell as the pain focused into tears, almost like the nagas within my womb were clawing at the fleshy walls with their fangs and nails.

Oso flinched away from me with a hiss, his fangs fully bared while the red-and-black hues locked onto something below my line of sight. All signs of hostility drained from his expression and body language before Kara interrupted his gaze, the viper naga's tongue flicking out in agitation as he lowered himself between my legs.

Todo's face encompassed my sight as I urged my brain to forget everything it had just witnessed, amber flecks glowing brighter as I felt myself slip under his ability.

I didn't want to know why the older pair of nagas had suddenly become so hostile. I didn't want to know what Oso had seen to drain everything into fear.

It was the only emotion that I didn't want to see while giving birth.

Fear to the nagas meant death was close.

If it was mine or the children's, I never wished to know.

Another searing cut within my womb drew a strangled shriek from me, my knuckles turning white with exertion while Todo remained calm. He leaned even closer, kissing my sweaty forehead in a chaste kiss before nearly pressing our faces together.

Something slipped from my vaginal canal, a flinch in Todo's hands.

No other cry besides mine as the pain raged within my womb, my tears running dry while my vocal cords strangled themselves in tension.

Words from someone other than Todo, a welcoming sensation of calm overlaying the pain for a moment before a larger object forced its way into me. Both emotions fought with each other before I felt cold, the sudden chill rushing from my womb up my spine.

There was no foreign feeling, no desire to push anything out.

No pain.

My head lolled back onto something semi-firm, my hands falling limply on either side while I fought to breathe.

The darkening blue sky gave way to the orange-tinted sunset, interrupted by a teal crown surrounding someone's head.

"My flower."

The familiar nickname Kara had given me. I swallowed thickly as my saliva glands refused to wet my mouth.

"You've done it, my flower, my precious mate," Kara leaned closer while his hands cradled my head against what I presumed to be his chest. I had no idea where Todo had gone nor how much time had passed, "But I need you to stay awake with me."

"...why..."

"We're not letting nature have its way with you."

I blinked slowly, the sentence sounding sweet for a moment before memories flooded my head.

Nature's rule

.

"...I feel cold," Another swallow produced some saliva, the statement sending a chill through my skin.

"Todo is making a fire for you," Kara lightly smiled as he stroked my cheeks with his thumbs, "Oso is taking care of his child."

Child...?

"Did I only give him one?"

"...there were two," The crestfallen expression was hard to miss, "What we had feared for the other twins had happened with his: one killing the other in the womb. Ghost, Specter, and Juniper are taking care of the stillborn."

Juniper...the name of Kara's daughter. The children were taking care of one of their own.

"The living one...?" I tried to tilt my head down to see where Oso was, knowing he'd be holding his newborn. Kara's hands kept me still.

"Lotus."

I let out a soft hum, a gentle smile on my face before I felt warmth wrap around my body, "It's a beautiful name. What about the other?"

"We haven't named her."

"I...want to give her a name to remember her by," Closing my eyes for a moment, I thought of an appropriate flower. Kara held my gaze when I opened them again, "Rose."

"Is there a special meaning?"

"Many -- all of them fit her fate in nature."

"Lotus and Rose," Todo's voice chimed in before leaning into view, "Feeling a little better, (y/n)?"

"More tired than anything else..."

"I'd let you hold her, but you've been through enough."

Oso's voice drew my attention to my left, his height close to the ground as he held something in his arms. The red-tipped tail draping over his forearm was all I needed.

"My gift that keeps giving to me," The red-headed krait naga leaned down and kissed my lips gently, "I will never be deserving of you."

"I'm sure you will eventually," I offered a smile to the three nagas, "Just...allow me to rest for the night. Promise that you'll stay with me?"

Oso laughed. Kara hummed with a nod. Todo's lips curled into a smirk.

All responses meant the same:

Yes.

Independant!Osomatsu and Sister!Reader

(Inspired by a mash-up of Linkin Park's 'Lost' and 'Numb'. 'Lost' echoed what I imagined Osomatsu to be feeling while 'Numb' was the Reader's outcry against her older brother.

Takes place after Season 1, Episode 24 (season finale, part one). There are depictions of violence.)

I couldn't believe what happened, despite seeing it with my own eyes.

Last Friday, the house was full of my rambunctious sextuplet brothers and their antics of defined chaos...but today, I was greeted by the back of a lone red sweatshirt leaning over the round table positioned in the common room. The air was thick with heavy grief, the void of shoes within the mud area just in front of the main door speaking volumes of what had happened.

My hand tightened around the strap of my bookbag, my lips pursing in sadness as I took a deep breath in.

"Shut up."

The command was sharp, stealing the breath in my lungs as I briefly caught the furious glare just appearing over my eldest brother's shoulder, the red glint hard to miss within the shadow cast over his face.

"You don't even know what I was going to say," My throat tightened in frustration, kicking off my sneakers and dropping the bag by the dresser holding our outside gear. With socked feet padding towards the common room, my gut began screaming at me to stop advancing towards the man whom I knew was overcome with regret.

"I don't need to hear it," He didn't move an inch. The only indication that he wasn't paralyzed was his only visible eye following my every move, "You,

Mom, and Dad are all the same."

"We're still here!" I shouted, splaying a hand over my heart, "No one has truly abandoned you!"

"'Abandon'..." He rolled the word over in his mouth, repeating the term like he couldn't understand it, "You'll do the same when you graduate."

I dumbly blinked at the accusation, struggling to find the words to deflect the lie he seemingly believed.

He took my pause as admission, moving his head to focus back on the table in front of him as a skeptic huff left his lips.

"Osomatsu."

He didn't look back at me.

"Osomatsu!"

"Fuck off."

I reached down with the intention to rest my hand on his shoulder, wanting him to feel that I wouldn't 'abandon' him like he felt the others had. I wanted to show him that I still loved him as a brother and that it would be okay, that the other five sextuplets would occasionally visit when they had time to settle into a rhythm.

What I wasn't expecting was the curled fist driving into my left cheek.

My voice froze as my body slammed through the wooden sliding door leading to the kitchen, my head colliding with the kitchen table before the punch's momentum released me and gravity pulled me back to the floor.

My vision blurred, my older brother turning into four copies for a moment before the images merged as he shook his fist while relaxing his standing position. I felt something warm drip down the back of my neck before the same warmth trickled over my right eye, my hand mindlessly reaching up and brushing the obstruction away.

The pads of my fingers were coated with something dark, the only light streaming in from the common room at this time of night.

"I told you to 'fuck off'. This is your fault."

My brow pinched together in uncertainty, fear, and sorrow as I tried to stand up, suddenly feeling lightheaded and falling back to the floor on my knees, "I...I was only trying to help, Osomatsu..."

He clicked his tongue against his cheek, "Now I'll have to fix the door because of you."

"That...was your fault," I gritted my teeth as I attempted to stand back up, adrenaline rushing at the unfairness of the situation, "Our brothers are trying to live like other people, Osomatsu! You don't get to be angry and sullen because they're trying to be better!"

The red glint was back in his eyes as his darkened gaze shifted from the broken door to me.

"You don't get to act like a petulant child being told 'no'!"

"Shut up."

"No, I won't! Osomatsu, how would Jyushimatsu feel if he came back

right now

to see you throwing the same fucking fit you did when we were celebrating Choromatsu getting a job! How would Karamatsu react if he realized you had finally snapped and punched

your little sister

! He punched you when you only

kicked

our brother!" With every exclamation, Osomatsu bared down on me.

"I said 'shut up'!" His fist clenched, the knuckles red and partially swollen from the first hit.

"

I'm sad, too, asshole!

" I screamed at him, pressing my back into the broken kitchen table and closing my eyes tightly. They stung with tears, "

I hate that everyone is gone!

"

My legs gave out and I fell to my knees as my body became wracked with sobs, crying in unleashed sorrow and pain as I leaned my head back to cry out to the ceiling, "

Everyone is leaving and bettering themselves, but I'm repeating my second year of university one more time because of you!

"

The next inhale was broken by a sucking gasp, my lungs struggling to compensate for the dire need of oxygen as I kept screaming out.

"

I hate being the one to swallow my sadness and try to be happy all the time! I can't take this anymore!

" When the position became too difficult to hold, I leaned forward and planted my hands onto some of the wooden shards from the door underneath me. Thickened tears continued to stream from my eyes, my mind finally registering that I was bleeding, "

So go ahead...keep punching me, keep screaming at me to 'shut up'...! I'd rather be a punching bag than live in your shadows anymore!

"

I choked on built-up saliva, coughing out between sobs as I waited for the onslaught to continue.

I knew my sextuplet brothers well, knew how each of them showed frustration.

Osomatsu preferred violence to get his point across, regardless if it meant hitting a random person or a family member. It's how he always reacted to an extreme emotion that he didn't know how to deal with. His reaction to grief wasn't any different from fear.

The silence from my brother was eerie, but I didn't care.

"I tried...I tried so

hard

to pass the final exam, Osomatsu..." The sorrow opened the chained door deep within my heart as my lips became more loose, "I still

need

you as an older brother, but you're not there for me anymore! I...I need your shoulder more than ever...but because you don't see me, I have to keep it hidden..."

Seconds stretched to what felt like hours as I physically became more weak, unsure if it was from grief finally loosening its grip on me or if I had lost too much blood. I didn't know which one I desired more.

Lightheaded and slowly regaining control of my breathing, I closed my eyes as I struggled to stand back up.

With my hands gripping the shattered edge of the table, I lifted myself up into a standing position before moving towards the only door that the kitchen had. The same exit Osomatsu continued to block.

"...move."

The word was just that, my voice faltering in commanding him. It was all I had to simply stand on my feet without swaying from side to side.

The red glint remained in his shadowed eyes.

He still wanted to hit something.

"Move."

Nothing.

Taking in a shuddering breath, I walked towards my aggressor.

I expected another punch, another verbal berating, another fight.

I wasn't expecting to walk into him, the contact gentle as my chin became cradled by his shoulder, our chests pressed together while his right arm -- the same one he used to hit me -- kept me against him and his left arm steadying both of us against the untouched door jamb.

The surprisingly tender collision was something my body seemingly needed, my legs finally giving out and dropping all support while Osomatsu took my full weight in stride. He remained steadfast despite the uncertain position.

"...you were holding all of that in...?" His words were a whisper, the tone buried deep in the exhale. I could barely nod, "...why?"

"...I know you," It was hard to speak with my throat pressed against his collarbone, but I was too tired to move, "You weren't given enough time to process the changes...to process what had been happening since Friday. I know you get violent when you're faced with an unexpected situation that you hadn't accounted for. None of us knew Choromatsu was getting a job and moving out."

The shuddering inhale from me threatened to bring back the tears in full force.

"We didn't expect the others to find places to live, to apply and be accepted into jobs. I heard..." I closed my eyes against the memory, "I heard the fight you and Todomatsu had. I know that you didn't hit him for the entire time he berated you while physically assaulting you with that rolled up newspaper. I know that you only reacted when he brought up...what he thought were your emotional shortcomings."

I felt Osomatsu slowly tense up.

"I...I didn't want you to have more burdensome news on top of what already happened..."

"...you think...that you're a burden?" I felt his grip adjust on my figure, the left arm joining the right as my feet were lifted off of the ground. The side swaying and his knees pushing against my own indicated that he was moving me, but my eyes were too heavy to open, "Since...since when have you thought that?"

"Since you all graduated high school...Osomatsu, I'm a failure among failures," My sense of balance was thrown off as his arm tucked underneath my knees, lifting me up before adjusting me into a horizontal position. The semi-firm cushioning underneath my body only indicated that I was laying down on something.

"Nah, you're not," His voice was pulling away as I fought to open my eyes, the stickiness sealing my eyelids shut like glue, "You're not a piece of shit NEET like me. Can't be since you're still attending university."

"That's not the same..."

"Sure, it is," There was a huff of air, similar to a laugh but the emotion wasn't behind it, "You're still in the upper echelons of society, as far as I'm concerned...as are our brothers. You lot climbed past the hellish tiers and are able to enjoy what everyone else has."

I barely flinched when something cold and wet pressed against my forehead, brushing down towards my right cheek before lifting and repeating the motion, "...why won't you do the same?"

The wiping motion faltered for a moment before continuing, "Why would I?"

I paused as the warm material lightly brushed against my eyes.

"Because I want you to prove to yourself that you can," When I felt the glue-like substance loosen, I risked opening my eyes. The dark hues of my oldest brother met my gaze, the red glint no longer present as he lifted the washcloth from where he had attempted to press it against my eyes again, "I want you to see that you...that you can do more than just hurt people."

My eyes widened as his lips lifted in a gentle smile.

I hadn't seen him truly smile in more than a week, his face often wearing a smirk or wide grin that hid how he was actually feeling.

"I should be the one saying those things to you, shouldn't I?" Osomatsu dipped the washcloth into a bowl filled with lukewarm water, rinsing off the blood and twisting it tight enough to leave the washcloth damp, "I..."

The pause in his voice caught my attention more than the pinched brow and hooded eyes as his lips trembled into a frown, his hand gently wiping against my face as he thought of what to say.

Another dip, another rinse.

"I'm sorry."

Our gazes met and held each other in respect. The weight of sorrow and regret in his dark hues was immeasurable.

"I became too fixated on what was going on that I began to ignore everything else. Karamatsu had warned me that if I had tried to pull anything during the weekend, he would personally see to it that I'd be dealt with accordingly," Osomatsu dropped the washcloth into the bowl, seemingly forgetting about it for the moment, "When I was ready to move forward, everyone had left. I was blindsided."

My hand gently reached out to touch his, the water still clinging to his skin as he snatched my hand in his.

"My world changed from six to one in what seemed like hours. I felt alone despite knowing that our brothers would come visit home at some point, but...I became more scared that you'd leave me, too," He lifted our hands up to his forehead, pressing the back of my fingers into his brow as he bent forward over the green couch that I was laying on, "I was the one to destroy your final thesis papers. It was absolutely wrong of me to do, I can see that clearly now...but it made sense when my senses were swallowed by fear. I had thought that if...if you could be held back, you'd have to stay and not move."

My final theses, the thick wad of paper essays that I needed in each class to graduate. I had found them completely destroyed yesterday morning, shredded and burnt just enough to reveal what they were without being able to be turned in.

I had known it was Osomatsu that had destroyed them, but never thought of a way to force an apology from him for it. The struggle for a deadline extension was grueling, always hidden behind a smile when I was home yesterday and only known by the sudden rush I had this morning to sprint to the closest library to print the file from the USB drive that I kept hidden in my bookbag. The newly-printed theses were safely turned in to the appropriate professors, but by the time I handed them in, it was past the extension. Society had seemed against me this whole day to ensure that Osomatsu's fear-induced ruin came to fruition.

"...you don't look shocked," I couldn't tell if he was pleased or surprised from my reaction.

"Because I knew it was you," My eyes slid close against my wishes, a wave of fatigue washing over my body as he continued to clean up the damage he had done to my body, "You're the only one that can do that sort of thing since Mom and Dad

want

me to graduate and I'm always careful about where I store my important school papers. You were the one that asked where my bookbag was two nights ago in order to 'leave a present I wouldn't forget'."

Quiet settled into the room as he continued working, each wipe of the washcloth feeling more and more comforting.

"After you rest up..." Osomatsu gave a small huff of a laugh, "I'll let you hit me as hard as you can for what I've done to you."

"I'll give you two in succession," I quipped back, smiling a little as the washcloth faltered once more in its path while we both laughed a little, "I'll make sure to do it outside so we don't get yelled at again."

As if I had beckoned it to happen, our parents shouted in surprise before Dad yelled our names from down the staircase.

"I'll take the fall for this one," Osomatsu set the washcloth aside as he stood up, "I've become somewhat of an expert at repairing doors since I'm the one thrown through them the most."

"Thanks, brother. I'll see you in the morning," As the bedroom door slid closed, I allowed myself to finally give in to the fatigue and stress from the past week, tumbling into a deep slumber.

Osomatsu x Reader

I heaved a sigh as I checked the time on my phone, patiently waiting for the pedestrian symbol to change so I could get to the train station on time. I had no bags on me, nothing that could be grabbed at by a stranger.

Osomatsu called me paranoid.

I wanted to feel more secure.

The light changed and the rush of walkers meshed into the walkway, my feet following their flow as I resumed my trip. With the station's entrance in sight, I quickened my pace as the hairs on the back of my neck began to raise in warning.

A swelling feeling in my gut told me that someone was watching me, anxiety tried to make me look behind myself to see if there actually

was

someone. I usually had one of my boyfriend's brothers walk with me if he was unable, but Osomatsu said that I would be okay this time.

No one would try to hurt me in broad daylight in the middle of a busy city block...right? My eyes darted around to look for safe places to stand at; coffee stores, secured building entrances...a train platform. Every place had a security camera for these kinds of things, or so I hoped.

Paying my fare, I refused to look behind me while pulling out my phone to dial the Matsuno household, unsure if Todomatsu would answer my call on his personal phone. Double-checking the lines that were running, I picked the one heading

away

from my home, wanting to give the stranger that may be following me the wrong indication.

My heart pounded frantically within my chest as I waited on the platform, wishing for time to pass faster with every passing second. With my finger hovering over the 'DIAL' button, I stood frozen as the train arrived.

People left the train, others boarded.

The train departed without me on board...without

my stalker

on board.

His dark hair was kept clean, the business suit pressed and clean while a leather briefcase remained clenched in his left hand.

I don't think his eyes ever left me.

Punching the button with my thumb, I held the phone up to my ear while giving the stalker a wide berth, praying fervently for someone to pick up.

"Matsuno househ--"

"Totty! Get Osomatsu on the phone," I hushed the speaker instantly, breathing out the command as I walked towards the station's security booth.

"Uh...sure," I could hear Todomatsu yell out for Osomatsu, the aforementioned man complaining about how he was being distracted from the horse race.

"Yo."

"Osomatsu, I need help. I think I'm being followed!" While keeping my volume low, I tried to convey the panic I was feeling, "I'm at the train station."

"Listen to me, (y/n)," In an instant, Osomatsu had dropped the playful tone and spoke with certainty, "Find a police officer at the station and have them keep tabs on you. If they don't, come right here. I'm on my way to pick you up. I love you, keep yourself safe."

A dead tone indicated that he had hung up, more than likely on his way here.

"Oh, please Osomatsu..." I clutched the phone close to my chest as I began to follow his instruction, "...please hurry..."

Osomatsu slammed the phone down and practically jumped into his shoes, barely sparing any time to fix the tongues into place. The 'clang' of the phone drew his brothers' attention.

"Dude, what's wrong?" Choromatsu huffed as he leaned into the doorway, watching his older brother frantically tug on the signature red jacket before Osomatsu merely threw it over his shoulder.

"(Y/n)'s in trouble."

With those three words, Osomatsu was gone from the doorway, his feet carrying him down the road with growing speed.

He knew how (y/n) worried about the seemingly outlandish occurrences that could happen to her, knew he was the one to push her into walking alone today.

Osomatsu didn't want to end this day with regret.

My fear spiked as I turned the corner to see the security booth empty, a sheet of paper taped to the door that the officer was on a foot patrol and would be back momentarily. Without thinking, I dialed out the emergency number on my phone and scanned the area for a public place to stay within the station.

Breathing a little of relief, I made my way towards the information desk that was only twenty or so feet away, not trying to lower my guard for a single moment.

My shirt was grabbed from behind, something shoved deep into my mouth when I opened it to scream for help. My phone, the emergency number still displayed on the screen, was yanked from my hands.

I tried to make a physical display that would draw attention, throw my arms around, kick at the man trying to drag me somewhere further from the information desk, stomp at the smooth tiles with my shoes.

Anything.

My heart fell to my feet when no one looked my way, no one stepped in to intervene...no one was around. The crowds that had waited for the train's arrival were long gone, those that disembarked had continued on their way, and the train station wasn't large enough to house more than a few stores that had already closed.

'

Keep yourself safe'

.

I began punching and kicking at the stranger with renewed vigor, using everything I had at my disposal to wound him. My nails dug at his skin, his face, my feet tried to kick at his balls, his knees.

"Quite a feisty one."

Seemingly without effort, the man had dragged me into a service hallway and pinned my arms above my hand by wrapping his own arm around my biceps. I tried to reach down to remove the gag I choked on, lashing out like a wildcat.

All of the air was forced out of my lungs as the stalker shoved me chest-first into the wall, a pathetic wheeze sound from behind the cloth in my

mouth. I couldn't take a breath in fast enough through my nose, feeling myself grow lightheaded from the impact before the right side of my face met the same wall, stars and lights swirling in my vision.

Three blocks to go. Still no sign of (y/n).

Osomatsu swore under his breath and urged himself to go even faster, not caring if he'd feel it tomorrow.

The train station came into view faster than he realized, grabbing his train pass from his back pocket and slamming it down on the gate keypad, using his momentum to vault over the gate just as it registered the successful payment.

He couldn't hear the officer calling out for him to stop, his mind too focused to care.

The flow of the crowd indicated that another train was arriving soon, possibly within the next few minutes with how busy it was. Osomatsu gritted his teeth until his jaw hurt, barely slowing down to push past other people while keeping an ear and eye out for any strange happenings.

The stores were closed, people thrummed with confusion and anger at his shoves, the security booth was empty, the information desk held a short line.

The hairs on the back of his neck stood on end, fearing that he was too late and (y/n) had been kidnapped. Osomatsu's heart boiled with anger, swearing that he hadn't lost her yet.

That's when he heard it, an impossibly faint noise that snapped his focus to a hallway that was far from the plaza. His feet adjusted without falter, speeding up as he came closer to the hallway.

A man -- a salaryman, at that -- groping at someone's chest, grinding against their bottom while leaning in close to the person's ear.

Osomatsu didn't stop, his anger burning bright in his eyes as he instantly recognized the shirt the person was wearing -- the one that had been lifted up above her breasts while the greedy asshole pawed at the flesh under her bra. He was the one to give the shirt to her on her previous birthday, after all.

Giving no warning, Osomatsu curled his right hand into a fist and ran it into the stalker, feeling and hearing a satisfying 'crunch' under his knuckles as the man's jaw gave way to the punch. Both men fell to the ground -- Osomatsu effectively shoving the man several feet away from (y/n) -- and the red-clad sextuplet was on top of the assaulter in an instant, landing blow after blow as he made sure the pervert couldn't get away.

I only heard the thudding footsteps before a bone-cracking 'crunch' sounded behind me, the pervert's hands flying from my breasts and immediately relieving the pressure I had felt behind me and around my arms. Taking advantage of the freedom, I scrambled to pull my shirt down as I crawled towards the train station plaza, pulling out the cloth gag that revealed itself to be a long sock.

When I deemed that I got far enough away, I glanced behind me to see the familiar red jacket discarded near me, my eyes lifting up to the man straddling the pervert and absolutely whaling him. The white undershirt wasn't tucked in like usual, the shoes sitting on his feet haphazardly.

I reached out and clutched the jacket to my chest, breathing in its scent of cigarettes and cinnamon, trying to lose myself from the scenario unfolding behind me.

"(Y/n)," My name was soft in the silence after the beating, nearly startling me from the jacket's smell until I saw Osomatsu kneel in front of me, "Sorry for not being faster..."

His hands gently lifted to the jacket and cautiously pulled it from my hands, instead turning it around and laying it around my shoulders. The tenderness in his eyes showed uncertainty of what to ask.

"I--" My throat was raw from the dry sock, clearing it a little before continuing, "I don't feel sore...there..."

Relief flooded his face before it fell into sorrow, "But he still touched you."

Words became stuck as I leaned forward, resting my forehead against his shoulder before Osomatsu wrapped his arms around me. The comforting gesture was needed, desired.

"What's going on here?!" An authoritative shout sounded behind Osomatsu, his grip unwavering as he partially turned towards the officer that had been on patrol, "You're under arrest for assau–!"

"The man you're wanting to arrest is there," I felt Osomatsu gesture with his head, "He's the one who assaulted her."

I barely lifted my head to see the officer look dumbfounded at the scene behind us, refusing to see for myself the carnage that Osomatsu left, "It's true..."

"I'll..." The officer walked past us to check on the pervert somewhere on the ground, "I'll, uhh, need you two to come down to the police station to file a report."

"Want me to carry you?" Osomatsu asked tenderly, lowering his beautiful dark hues back to me.

I slowly nodded, "...piggyback..."

"As my princess declares," He kissed my left cheek gently before adjusting his position, allowing me to wrap my arms around his neck and shoulders. As we walked to the police station just down the road, I could feel his back muscles ripple under the shirt, feel his heartbeat against my chest.

All I could do was weep.

"Here you are, darling," Osomatsu's voice drew my attention from the stark white walls of the police station, holding out a bottle for me to take before sitting on the floor in front of me, "What else do you need?"

"...my peace of mind back," I tried to laugh, but the sting of fresh tears was hard to hide from him.

"Well, I can't get that for you," He huffed in amusement, resting a hand on my right knee while I sipped the cold water from its bottle, "As much as I wish...I can't get that..."

Our eyes met and fully understood what we both wanted could never be gotten back easily. His gaze faltered before falling down to his jacket, looking it over as if he was making sure I was wearing it correctly.

Since arriving, I had donned the jacket completely and zipped it all the way up, pulling my hands into the sleeves when I still felt exposed, refusing to let an inch of shirt or skin show. Thankfully, the belt I wore hadn't been undone by the pervert and a rape kit had proven that there was no trauma to

that

area.

"Then..." I sipped at the bottle again, refusing to let my throat show, "How about staying at your house for a little bit?"

Osomatsu's expression brightened before darkening again, "Are you sure? There's five of me there."

"I trust you and the others more than anyone else on the street right now," I placed the sleeve covering my hand over his, nearly begging for him to let it happen.

"All right, then," He leaned back a little before inching closer to keep our hands from pulling apart, wearing a smile, "We'll just wait for clearance to leave. You can borrow whatever you need from Mom and we'll escort you where you need to go in the morning. I'm sure--"

He took a deep breath before laughing a little.

"I'm sure the guys will understand. I'll make sure you can stay as long as you need."

A few hours later, Osomatsu and I were released from the station. Although he had gotten a warning about the violent measures he took, Osomatsu never apologized for it. He carried me to his place in the same manner, allowing me to rest on his back while he took on the burden of walking.

He filled the night's silence with stories about how he and his brothers were trying to figure out which horse to bet on in the upcoming race, about how Karamatsu suggested the one with the most handsome rider while Jyushimatsu claimed that the funniest name would win. When Osomatsu tired that subject out, he switched to how he was looking forward to the next date we would go on.

"Ah...that was faster than expected," He hummed cheerfully as we walked next to the fence lining the family's property, "Want me to set you down?"

I tightened my grip on him, drawing a laugh as he rubbed his head against mine.

"No worries. I got you."

Kicking open the sliding door, Osomatsu opened his mouth to announce his presence before Choromatsu rounded the corner with fury in his eyes.

"Where have you been?! We can't finish this...without...you," His anger quelled as Choromatsu and I met eyes, "(Y/n)?"

"...you're back?" Ichimatsu had followed his older brother out of the common room, dropping the newspapers he had in his hands before taking a step towards Osomatsu. He had somehow picked up on what transpired, "I'll get the spare futon."

The fourth sextuplet walked up the stairs and disappeared from sight as Todomatsu and Jyushimatsu peered out from the common room's doorway.

"(Y/n)?" Todomatsu lowered his phone, concern laced in his voice while Jyushimatsu jumped up and rushed me. Osomatsu must've felt me flinch as he dodged out of the way of the charging brother.

"Nuh-uh, Jyushimatsu. Not right now."

Jyushimatsu rolled to a stop against the wall, looking 'down' at us from his upside-down position. His wide smile had completely disappeared with Osomatsu's warning, "Why? What happened?"

"Stuff."

"You don't usually go sprinting off for 'stuff'," Karamatsu yawned as he scratched his arm, looking more worn down than anyone else. Ichimatsu came back down the stairs as he talked, mutely motioning for me to follow him. I indicated that I wanted to get down, to which Osomatsu obliged.

Ichimatsu cautiously took the jacket sleeve and led me up the stairs, saying nothing as we stopped by his parents' room to find a more comfortable sleeping gown than my street clothes. When I nodded my approval of what I found, he led me to the shared bedroom the brothers had and motioned for me to change. Once more, he waited for my acknowledgement before closing the sliding door to give me full privacy.

Folding Osomatsu's jacket and placing it on the couch, I did the same with my own clothes before sliding on the gown.

"Ichimatsu...?"

"...yeah?" The muffled reply came a few seconds later.

I looked around the room to see only the single futon, expecting to see the sextuplets' bed splayed out and ready to use, "Where...will you all sleep?"

"Downstairs. Don't worry."

"Are you sure?"

"...yes, now sleep," I heard his footsteps move away, taking the duvet that had been left next to the futon and pulling it over me. Sleep came fast.

"So, tell me. What 'stuff' has you scrambling for your things and coming back with a weary (y/n) on your back," Karamatsu pressed as Osomatsu watched his girlfriend be led upstairs, "Oy."

The oldest brother snapped his focus back to the four gathered in front of him, "She was molested at the train station. Called me for help."

The stunned silence was refreshing.

"She wanted to stay the night. I invited her for several."

"...and...?"

"The pervert's alive."

"How kind of you," Choromatsu scoffed.

"What? Should I have killed him?"

"Torture lasts longer," Ichimatsu gave a dark chuckle as he re-entered the conversation, "I can give you a few tips."

Osomatsu let out an amused laugh, "I'll think about it."

"Let us know about it, if it happens again," Jyushimatsu straightened out from his splayed position, cheerfully voicing a suggestion, "We won't be kind."

The eldest shook his head in disbelief, "And no one believes us when we warn them about you."

--Mature-- Alpha!Osomatsu x Beta!Reader

WARNING! This is a mature chapter, and meant for an 18+ audience. If you're younger than that, I respectfully ask you find something else to read.

If you're older than 18, you may continue at your own discretion.

This story contains mature sex scenes and depictions of rape (female to male).

I trudged home after a grueling shift of work, setting down the requested grocery bags on the kitchen counter and getting into my usual routine of checking up on Osomatsu when I heard a grunt upstairs followed by a whimper.

Osomatsu's rut wasn't expected to start until a few days from now, so I had called off from work to stay here and keep him from running wild like I always do.

The grunting noise was definitely from him but the whimper that accompanied it was new.

I barely moved to the staircase when my senses were assaulted by Osomatsu's strong cinnamon scent mixed with an equally strong Omega's:

Totoko

.

Did she come here knowing that Osomatsu was about to go into a rut? Did he call her over? Why was this happening now after months of planning and dodging?

My body slid down the nearby wall and nearly collapsed onto the staircase as a thought wormed its way into my head: I wasn't enough.

I was never enough.

After all, who had heard of an Alpha claiming a Beta. Alphas were meant to mate with Omegas, and Betas were just to stay to ourselves.

My anger festered, but I couldn't just go into his room to announce my frustrations. If they had already mated, I could be killed or severely injured by Osomatsu just by looking at Totoko.

I composed myself as much as I could and quietly walked past his room with my hand covering my nose, entering my own room and packing a suitcase while mentally going through different places where I could stay until Osomatsu's rut was over. It could be later on today, or at the end of next week.

I knew that talking to him now wouldn't do anyone any good, so I had to give them time...give

him

time. With the suitcase in hand, I walked past Osomatsu's room once more and headed out the front door, leaving behind the groceries and everything else.

I don't want this...!

He mentally fought against every urge to continue, wanting to throw this whore of an Omega away from him and to cling to (y/n). His body refused, though, continuing to thrust into the mewling woman underneath him as his hands clamped under her knees and pushed them up towards her head, nearly bending her in half. The new position sent a wave of pleasure through him and allowed him further access to plunge deeper and deeper

until his knot plugged the Omega up, her cries intoxicating as her scent flooded his senses.

His mind partially relented against his primal urges, knowing that the only path forward was to finish this rape quickly.

Sending the woman underneath him into a howling frenzy, Osomatsu clamped his mouth down on her right breast, the tender and soft flesh distracting his instincts from marking the Omega as his own.

Some rational part of him knew that if it happened, it would be all over between him and (y/n).

Railing against Totoko, he coaxed her into an orgasm, her own climax sending him into one and unleashing his unwilling load into her, stuck together by the knot. With the beast within sated for a little while, Osomatsu forced himself out of Totoko, his engorged penis sliding out with a saturated 'pop' before he crawled to his bed. His left hand reached underneath his pillows and brought out a knitted scarf, the item absolutely soaked in (y/n)'s scent. She always remembered to leave something of hers behind, just in case he got too riled up when he was alone.

Now was the best time to use it.

"Ooh...Osomatsu..." Totoko breathlessly whined, following him to the bed while crawling on all four limbs, "You forgot something..."

She reached up to his knee, her soft hands gliding up to touch his hips and caress his chest as she pressed her naked and sweaty body against his leg.

"I didn't...forget anything," Osomatsu growled and turned his head away, knowing that she desired his mark somewhere on her form, "Go home, and stay the hell away from me."

"You don't mean that..." Her breath hit his chest and the beast began to stir again, her pheromones surging through his senses and the testosterone swelling within him once again. Her hand inched towards the knitted scarf,

slightly pushing it out of the way before Osomatsu snarled loudly, his teeth now bared and sharp canines protruding.

"Back...off...!"

Totoko didn't flinch back, her free hand wrapping around his fully erect dick and slowly pumping it, her thumb dancing across the tip as she forced the crook of her neck into Osomatsu's jawline. With the scarf no longer acting as a barrier, he could only breathe in Totoko's scent -- the sweet fragrance of thyme, lemons, and salmon assaulting his senses.

"Osomatsu, make me yours...!" Her voice struck a chord within Osomatsu, driving his inner beast nearly insane, "We were meant to be together...! Mark me!"

The beast guided his mouth towards her shoulder, his canines scraping across her skin as his tongue began to lick the silky smooth organ.

"Hey...I know it's not a big deal, but I like being here with you," (Y/n) smiled back towards him as he held her close from behind, his nose buried into her neck to cover up the smell of someone's heat drifting in from somewhere outside.

"I do, too..." His voice was muffled, but he knew she heard him by the acceleration of her heartbeat and the sudden thickness of her soothing scent, a gentle lavender mixed with apple and peppermint. He rubbed his cheek against her neck, trying to keep her calm.

"Osomatsu...why haven't you marked me yet? Or even..." Her voice grew quieter, "...you know...mated with me?"

"...I want to do it when we're both sure of it," Osomatsu's reply was gentle.

"Ahh! Osomatsu!"

Totoko's cries brought him back to reality, her hair tangled up in his left hand while his right was pulling her own right arm back, pressing her against him as he kept thrusting into her from behind.

Osomatsu was shocked, quickly scanning her shoulders and back to see that there was no vicious bite serving as his Alpha mark anywhere he could see on her body, mentally yelling at himself to not lose focus on the present. He gritted his teeth as she suddenly tightened around his shaft, his thrusts becoming increasingly faster until he felt his knot form again, releasing his load over and over as Totoko yelled in pleasure.

As soon as he was spent, Osomatsu withdrew without waiting for the knot to disappear and rushed to (y/n)'s room, locking the door behind him before collapsing onto the floor. His breath was ragged, his body pleaded for solace while the physical barrier between himself and the intruding Omega served as an effective leash for his inner beast. Totoko's surprise and protests rattled against the door, but diminished as time dragged on.

Eventually, Osomatsu heard her leave the house and her scent faded from the immediate surroundings.

"Damn it...!" A yell of both anger and fear was ripped from Osomatsu's throat as he thought to before he lay naked on the floor in (y/n)'s room, back to how Totoko had cornered him on the front porch and chased his retreating form into the house, how she had pinned him against the staircase and started sexually assaulting him while he was pleading for her to stop, how his will finally broke after fighting her desperate advances for what felt like hours.

Osomatsu bit on his bottom lip hard enough to break the skin and bleed as he refrained from remembering the rest, not wanting to think back on how he completely lost his control and kept mounting Totoko for three hours until (y/n) came back home. He shoved his face into his partner's pillow, using it to calm down and soothe the beast within.

Osomatsu didn't care how much blood got on the pillowcase; it could always be cleaned up afterwards.

I woke up from the stiff bed of the nearby hotel, stretching out my back before looking at my phone to see if there were any new notifications, only

to look on as nothing revealed itself. To say that I was disappointed would've been a small understatement. I was hoping that Osomatsu would've texted me to try and explain what had happened yesterday, but it was possible that something was stopping him. My head filled with images of him and Totoko mated, curled up with each other and happy while I had to keep my distance within my own home.

Thankfully, I didn't have to go into work, but now I was just kinda...stuck.

I had to risk Osomatsu getting mad at me.

Flicking over to my contacts, I dialed in his number and waited for the ringing. My worry grew with each ring, the noise cutting off after the third ring and the sound of someone answering the call filled the ear piece.

"...Hello?" It was Osomatsu. He sounded groggy, as if waking up from sleep.

"Hey...it's (y/n)," I started in a quiet voice, "Is every--"

"(Y/n)!" His voice jumped from groggy to nearly hysterical, "Please, come back home! I don't want to be here without you...!"

"O-Osomatsu, calm down!" Flustered by the sudden change in his tone, my nerves filled with anxiety. He wasn't acting like a normal mated Alpha, "I'll come back over, okay? Is...Totoko still there?"

"No! No...no, she isn't..." The shout slowly simmered into realization, his voice thick with an emotion similar to fear.

"Is there anything I need to pick up on the way? More gauze or ice packs?" I started getting ready to leave, tossing my pajamas into the suitcase and sliding on fresh clothes for the day.

"No...no, just come straight home...

please

..."

"All right, I'll be home in a little bit," With a spoken farewell, I ended the call and checked out of the hotel, walking down the road towards my house.

Located on the other side of town, I didn't have too far to walk, making my way to my front door to find the doorknob locked. While taking out my keys to unlock it, the door opened wide to reveal a haggard Osomatsu, his hair more ruffled than normal while my oversized clothes stretched across his much larger frame.

Without saying anything, he grabbed my outstretched hand and dragged me inside, holding me tight in a hug and rubbing his cheek on my neck. I could feel him take deep breaths as he held me.

While his appearance had startled me, his actions were more worrying. They were more akin to a long-lost puppy finding his way home instead of the actions of a mated Alpha.

"Oso...?" I reached up as high as I was able to with both of my arms pinned underneath his, my hands rubbing his back.

"I didn't mark her," He hiccuped, "She's not mine."

"O-okay..." Giving a nod, I tried to pull away, wanting to grab my suitcase that was still outside and get comfortable...but Osomatsu refused to budge.

"Please...let me stay like this..." The whine in his voice made me go still. Not due to the ability an Alpha has for commanding others, but because I had never heard him sound so weak before.

"Osomatsu, let me get my things from outside. After that, we can cuddle on the couch," I offered, still rubbing his back.

Taking another deep breath, Osomatsu slowly released his hold on me to pinch the side of my shirt fabric, watching as I grabbed my suitcase and locked the door behind me, walking him over to the oversized couch. I lay flat on it, pressing my back into the back cushions as Osomatsu quickly followed me down. He nuzzled his face against my neck again and I rubbed his head, slowly working out the tangles and knots. His dark hair was still

partially damp, the cherry red elongated scrub marks along his arms and neck revealing some of the signs of his frenzied cleaning.

Osomatsu's arms wrapped around my back, a hand sliding underneath my shirt and resting just below my bra while his legs entangled with mine. I could feel his breath against my skin as he calmed himself down, his body becoming less tense with each breath he took.

I couldn't bring myself to ask anything in the moment, as it was obvious that he needed to be comforted. His attitude answered one of my questions from yesterday, that what had happened wasn't his fault. Which meant that Totoko must've still been in heat yesterday, and somehow forced her way into my home.

I knew that some Alphas lose themselves around an Omega in heat, so I couldn't fully blame him for some of the actions that happened on his part...but this wasn't the time for accusations. My partner needed me in his time of consolation, and I was willing to oblige what I could.

"Hey..." Osomatsu's voice brought my attention to him, looking down into his dark eyes, "We're going to be okay, (y/n)."

"I should be the one telling you that," I smiled as I rubbed the top of his head hard, easing up when a calm look passed over his face, "Wanna talk about what happened?"

"...I'd rather you know my side first," He released me and sat up by my feet, allowing me to sit up freely and get comfortable. I took in a slow breath, barely smelling his relaxed scent in the air: cinnamon with a hint of clove and nutmeg. I gave him a nod when I was ready.

"I wanted to get the house ready for you before you came home yesterday when I realized that it was our anniversary. That's why I asked you to get things I could cook for us," He inched a little closer, as if the foot-and-a-half between us was too large of a gap, "Then Totoko stopped by when I was tidying up the front porch. I could smell she was still in her heat and told her to go home. She refused and made it very clear that her visit was...

intentional

, following me in through the screen door I accidentally left unlocked. She--" His breath hitched as thick tears began filling his eyes, falling down his cheeks and dripping unheeded onto the couch, "(Y/n), she

raped

me. I tried

so hard

to get her off of me, but something inside me just snapped and I--before I knew it, she was on top of me."

My words of comfort died on my lips, the full story unfolding as his strange behavior suddenly made sense.

I wanted to hold him close, to physically comfort him so that he wouldn't think of Totoko's horrific action anymore; I wanted to scream at the Omega for intruding on property and family, my desire to tear her into pieces growing more vivid as I dwelled on it.

Osomatsu -- the man that I wanted to spend my life with, the Alpha that did his due-diligence when it came to asserting our relationship when challenged by others, the one that always wanted to prove he was worthy of my love -- had been violated by a close childhood friend.

How was anyone supposed to console a rape victim? How was I supposed to comfort the Alpha that was steadfast to me...?

My hands reached out towards his head, reaching past as I leaned forward with the full intention to hug Osomatsu close.

His body launched towards me, throwing me back against the couch cushions as his arms tightened around my torso, burying his face completely into the side of my neck while he unleashed whatever sound his throat decided to make. His fingers tensed and dug into my back and

shoulder, his nails sharp as he fought some internal battle while I remained encompassed in his hold.

A shuddering inhale, a shout of anger mixed with sorrow. All of it passed against my skin.

Slowly, I began stroking his hair, uttering nothing as I let him vocalize his anguish.

My thoughts pointed towards Totoko and how this would drastically change how the two of us interacted with her, wanting nothing to do with her from this point forward.

I briefly wondered how Osomatsu's brothers would retaliate.

Wordlessly, I began humming a tune that I made up, feeling the tension deep within Osomatsu's body slowly relax as his fingers released their death grip on my shirt and skin. Continuing to stroke his hair, the tune became the only noise in the house as my Alpha slowly fell asleep next to me.

I gently kissed his forehead, smiling gently as I saw his lips close in a content grin.

--Mature-- HighSchool!Osomatsu x HighSchool!Male!Reader

Inspired by POURCAY's prompt.

WARNING! This is a mature chapter, and meant for an 18+ audience. If you're younger than that, I respectfully ask that you find something else to read.

If you're older than 18, you may continue at your own discretion.

This story contains sexual scenes (male to male).

I hated conflict.

Even as my head was pinned to the bathroom tile floor and I felt my gut kicked in harshly by two other boys, I hated conflict. It was what every person turned to when words failed them, ingrained into us so deeply that even toddlers explored how destructive they could be.

"Got it, faggot?" One of the teenage boys yelled down at me, his words accentuated with another kick to my shoulder, "Chat with my girl again and you'll wish you were never born!"

"She asked me a question about the homework that was due in class and I merely gave her a response," My voice sounded disconnected from the situation, almost monotone in its delivery.

I hated that, too.

"Don't get smart with me!" Another punch on my cheek to make his point clear. My face started to feel numb as both boys shoved me flat to the floor, using the momentum to push themselves into a standing position over me, "Teruko is mine!"

I watched them leave the bathroom, only moving to stand on my own well after the door had closed shut. Taking in shallow breaths, I walked towards the sinks and turned on one of the faucets, opening the cold water line and letting it run while I assessed the damage in the mirror.

The cheek that was punched was starting to swell but not to a noticeable degree, partially covered by my longer-than-usual hair. Undoing the small ponytail holding back most of my colored hair, I ran my fingers through the strands in an attempt to brush it back before tightening the elastic loop once more. My bangs were between kempt and grown out, their length brushing against my nose.

Other than the swelling, my face was untouched. I wouldn't know what kind of damage was done to my gut until I went to the doctor, but I didn't feel any kind of sharp or stabbing pain immediately make itself known.

Cupping my hands underneath the water flow, I splashed my face a few times to try and slow the swelling before turning the faucet off and pressing my handkerchief over my face.

"--only be a moment," A voice called out as the door opened, prompting me to look at the mirrored reflection. I recognized the face of one of my classmates, one of the sextuplets that attended this school. He briefly met my eyes before going into one of the stalls, locking the door behind him. I finished drying my face off, folding the handkerchief up and slipping it back into my uniform pants pocket while I walked out of the bathroom.

I knew who the sextuplet was, considering he sat in front of me in our classroom.

His name was Osomatsu Matsuno and he was one of the hardest students to ignore for me. Not because he was rowdy and rambunctious, but because he always somehow found the right ways to annoy me when he needed help. I

would've gladly given him help with his homework gladly, but Osomatsu never thought to ask for it politely. There were always demands, bribes, or empty promises with each request.

Sitting down at my desk quickly, I focused back on the open notebook and picked up the pencil.

"Hey, (y/n), got a minute?" Osomatsu's voice was quick to call out in front of me as I heard his chair roughly drag on the floor, a poke landing on the front of my left shoulder.

"If this is about homework, then I've already told you that you need to at least try it before I help you," I ignored the poke and continued where I had left off before I was brought to the bathroom, intending to finish the history homework before school ended.

"No, it's about the bruise on your cheek."

I rested my left palm over the cheek, acting like I was using it to lean on, "There's no bruise."

"Well, not right now, but I've been in enough fights that I know it'll turn into one by the end of the day," I felt Osomatsu's hand lay on my right shoulder, picking up my pencil before he pushed my shoulder back and forcing me to sit up, "Did someone slug you in the bathroom?"

His voice was thankfully quiet, his dark eyes boring right into mine as he asked.

"It was simply a misunderstanding."

"A misunderstanding doesn't usually devolve into a fight."

"There wasn't a fight. I didn't offer any defense."

"So you

let

him hit you? I don't know which is worse," Osomatsu furrowed his brow in disbelief.

"I don't like conflict."

"There's a difference between conflict and defending yourself, (y/n). Come on, man..." He scratched his left cheek with his right hand, partially leaning into his seat, "You're going to be killed one of these days."

"If I do, then it'll be upholding my own code," I leaned forward to finish the history homework, "Besides, it's not like many people target salarymen for things."

"People target salarymen for

a lot

of things, (y/n)."

"People always target other people," My eyebrows furrowed a little in frustration, finding that I had miswritten the last few sentences in the assignment, "This talking is distracting, Osomatsu. Please let me work."

Osomatsu had left me alone for the remainder of the day, allowing me to finish my homework before the final tone rang to announce the end of classes. With no extracurricular activities to participate in, I neatly tucked my school supplies into my bag and lifted it over my shoulder, adjusting my sweater vest and tie before leaving the classroom. Skirting around the area where the bullies of my year liked to hang out, I walked to my home just a few streets down from school.

Giving a short sigh before announcing that I was home, I slipped off my shoes before walking towards the back of the house where my room was, tucked away from the louder noise sources. Closing the door behind me, I let the school bag slide down my shoulder before taking off my school uniform, instantly hanging it up.

With my homework all finished at school, I pulled a loose-fitting colored shirt over the undershirt I was wearing and put some black sweatpants on, falling onto my bed face-first.

Tomorrow will be another repeat of today, just like it always had been for the past year.

As Osomatsu had predicted, my cheek had swollen up as the previous night drew to a close, turning into a puffed-up mass of tender flesh that hurt to touch. There was minimal bruising, but it was more than obvious that I had been punched.

As I took my seat, Osomatsu and I locked eyes for a brief second before he turned away, facing the front of the classroom when the teacher walked in to start the first class subject. He was less bothersome than normal, partially drawing my attention to the fact that he hadn't even asked to see my homework.

In fact, Osomatsu didn't even bother me until a few minutes before lunch.

"I wanna meet."

I didn't glance up from my homework, already completing the English and Japanese assignments and getting started on mathematics.

"Hey."

"I heard you."

"Well?" Osomatsu's hand caught the end of my pencil, forcing me to stop writing out the formula and making me shoot a quick glare up at him. He met my soft glare with narrowed eyes, throwing me off a little since he's never looked at me like that before.

"Well what? You want to meet, so where," I adjusted my posture, sitting up and pulling my pencil from his hand. His dark eyes followed me up.

"Northern stairwell," Osomatsu stood up before the tone chimed to alert the students that it was lunch, "Bring your food."

We held the gaze until Osomatsu was forced to break it, walking out of the classroom and harshly turning the corner. I set down the pencil in between the notebook pages, closing the homework and setting it inside my school bag before pulling out the small lunch that my mother had packed. A twitch caught my eye, looking down to see my left hand shaking a little and causing my eyebrows to lift a little in confusion.

Was I...

nervous

?

I had no idea why I was walking towards the northern stairs, but the look that Osomatsu had given me was...puzzling. He always had a playful look on his face, like anything he was doing was to be considered a joke. The focused expression he had didn't seem to belong, but the fact that it was the first time I'd seen it had made me cautious.

Osomatsu was the prankster of the class and, while his other brothers were jokesters themselves, he always seemed to never take anything seriously, no matter what the topic was. He had made it obvious that he was a troublemaker when he started attending the school, and was more than public about his...hobbies, including underage gambling with horse races or pachinko. Just like the other boys in school, he fancied himself a ladies man and flirted harshly with the girls in our year, so much so that he's been known to walk into class with a solid handprint on his face.

I'd hear stories about how he was outside of school, where those tendencies grew to be more extreme and the punishments escalated with it.

I had no idea why I was even willing to hear whatever he wanted to talk about, taking the first steps up in the north stairwell as I nervously ran a hair

through my long bangs.

I could handle the bullying that happened every so often, but this was unsettling.

"You made it."

Before I could turn back down the stairs, embroiled in my thoughts, Osomatsu's voice cut through the mental distractions. He sat alone behind the border wall that prevented students from falling off the top platform, sitting in front of the locked roof access door with a machine-bought lunch set in front of his crossed legs.

I didn't comment, simply sitting against the opposite wall and sliding down until my legs were crossed, setting my packed lunch in front of me and undoing the wrapped cloth.

"I wanted to let you know that you shouldn't have a problem with those guys anymore," Osomatsu stated before biting down on a steamed bun, ripping a large chunk off and revealing the marinated meat inside.

I paused in lifting my chopsticks to my mouth, the utensils holding some cooked rice and chopped up veggies. My eyes shifted to focus on his face, watching as he continued to eat and talk, "They had a funny idea in their heads about blaming you for stuff that you didn't do, but I straightened them out."

"You shouldn't have done that."

"Why?" His dark eyes were quick to look at me, some kind of emotion hidden in them that dared me to test him.

"Violence only begets violence. I didn't fight back because I don't want to become like them," I shoved the food into my mouth, shutting myself up as I tore my gaze from his stern look.

"Then what would happen if they started picking on a girl you like?" Osomatsu chugged down a few gulps of juice before staring at me, "Or

friends of yours?"

"I'd report them to the correct authorities and tell the victimized party to bear with it just a little longer," I stopped eating, meeting his glare full on with my own confidence. I knew the point he was trying to make, the very same point that was always fought over when it came to what was the right thing to do when you see someone get bullied.

Osomatsu remained silent and I wasn't sure if I preferred his witty comebacks or this unsettling silence.

"Besides, the bullies will eventually learn that they won't get a rise out of me and leave me alone," I lowered my focus to my food, eating once more to ensure that everything was eaten before lunch was over.

"If that's your opinion, then what about people that bully the bullies?"

"They're worse than the bullies," I slammed my chopsticks down on my lunchbox, shifting my eyes up to meet Osomatsu's, "If you truly want to know what I think, then just ask it to my face. I hate roundabout questioning."

"You hate conflict," Osomatsu's face switched from an angry expression to a sneer, as if he suddenly looked down at me morally, "You hate the things in life that are inevitable and don't plan on doing anything to counter them when they happen."

"It makes me the better man!"

"It makes you a fucking coward!" Osomatsu shouted over me, springing up from his sitting position and grabbing a fistful of my vest and shirt, dragging my up a little as he glared down at me, "Your wife, kids, and house will have a piss poor excuse for a protector when you do nothing to keep them safe!"

"That's what the police are for!" I snarled back, furrowing my brow and glaring at him harshly, "There are people whose jobs are to keep others safe!"

"You're just going to rely on others to clean up a mess that you started? You wouldn't try to keep those you love safe by offering yourself as a barrier between them and harm?"

"Of course I'd try to keep them safe..." I broke our glare, looking aside and avoiding his harsh eyes.

"Clearly," With the one word, Osomatsu released his grip and I fell down to the floor roughly, "Once we're out of school, there's no guarantee that I can keep the bullies off of you, (y/n). Grow a fucking spine already."

Something in my mind snapped.

"I'm not a girl, Osomatsu...I don't need protection, especially from you!" I gathered my feet underneath me, standing to my full height and glaring at him at near-eye level, "We're not even friends, so I don't need you watching my back like I'm something that's fragile, something that can be broken with a touch!"

"Then prove it," He took a step back, holding out his arms wide, "Prove that you don't need it."

I balked at the gesture, an open invitation to do whatever I wanted to show that I didn't need protection. There were several things that I could do: kick up my lunchbox as a distraction before rushing him, throw a punch into his gut, slap his face to try and disorientate him.

"Hell, maybe I'll turn on you. Show you that you're a coward the hard way."

Osomatsu's words re-focused my attention on him, my right fist flying out without a plan of attack. It collided with his left cheek with a solid smack, the sting racing down my fingers and wrist as I pulled away. He had turned his head to absorb the blow, his eyes locking onto mine while a small sneer pulled at his lips.

"Is that it?"

Anger that I had kept at bay threatened to explode out of its dark corner, the same anger that I felt towards the boys that had ambushed me in the bathroom yesterday. I didn't want to become just like the others, but the taunts that Osomatsu gave were more than I could bear.

I could handle being called every slang or term under the sun, except for when someone called me 'weak', that I needed to be 'protected', or when my own strength was called into question by being called a 'coward'. Osomatsu had somehow managed to say all three in the span of a few minutes.

Clenching my left fist, I threw another punch with intent to hit his shoulder, feeling the punch hit the target before I was shoved against the wall suddenly. I coughed out harshly as my left arm was twisted behind my back, my chest pressed against the wall as Osomatsu's hands kept me in place.

"I'd say that you hit like a girl, but I've had girls hit me much harder than that. The punches were so dainty that I would almost swear that it was my youngest brother hitting me," Osomatsu snarled, "Except he hits just as hard as the girls."

I grunted as I shoved my shoulders against the wall, throwing Osomatsu off of me a few inches and giving me enough room to turn to face him. Putting more muscle behind the next punch, I felt my right hand sink a little into his abdomen before his muscles tightened in response, hardening quickly and taking the hit at my full force.

Frustrated, I yanked my left hand from his grip and swung wildly at Osomatsu with both hands, some of the punches turning into slaps. He took every hit before I found myself pinned beneath him, his hands gripped around my wrists tightly and his knees ensuring that he stayed on top of me, no matter how hard I bucked and fought back. Osomatsu took in a deep breath before looking down at me, an amused smirk resting on his lips.

"That was a bit better, but keep on track with your education. You wouldn't last in a real fight."

"Clearly," I huffed as I tried to catch my breath, furrowing my brow as he leaned up while releasing my wrists, "Feel like your point was proven?"

"I knew that it would be proven no matter what you did. It was a matter of showing you how weak you are."

"I know I'm weak, okay?"

"Why don't you start working out?"

"I don't want to. I'm not going to get into fistfights every day and I'd purchase an air rifle if I really felt the need to protect my family and home," I rested my head against the floor, realizing that Osomatsu wasn't going to let me up anytime soon.

"An air rifle, huh? That's not a terrible idea, but it's more reliable to train up your body," Osomatsu adjusted his position, "We could train together. I'm a really gentle sparring partner, I've been told."

"Not interested," My colored hues caught his dark orbs.

"Then I'll just become your bodyguard when you become a popular salaryman," The smirk widened into a smile, "You'd pay me however you want."

"It would just be with money," I raised an eyebrow in confusion, earning a heavy sigh from the boy on top of me as his head dipped low in disappointment.

"That's...fine, too, I guess," He muttered before looking back at me, "Since you're not catching on to what I'm saying, I'll just say it outright."

Osomatsu took in another breath before I realized that his face was a little more flushed, his body tightening in anticipation before leaning down a little.

"I...think I like you, (y/n)."

"As a friend," I tried to deflect where I thought the conversation was going, my own face heating up as he splayed out his hands next to my head, "...right?"

"No, as something more."

"But...we're both guys."

"I know."

"And...you've been chasing skirts since we started high school," I tried to meld with the floor, pressing myself away from Osomatsu as I wasn't sure how to feel about this partial confession.

"I like girls, I know that..." A look of thoughtfulness swept across his face before Osomatsu focused back on me, "I also know that...I want to protect

you

just as much as I would a girl. It's weird, I know...I'm not sure of it myself."

"Maybe it's just because we're in this position?"

"What, the whole 'two guys panting on top of each other means they

need

to make out' thing? Not sure," Osomatsu shot a quick curious look at me, "Want to try?"

"Making out with you?"

"Yeah, just close your eyes and pretend I'm a girl or something," His teeth showed through the wide smile before it disappeared, a sour look on his face, "Actually, that probably wouldn't work...I'm not feminine enough. You can be the girl, then, since you've already got the longer hair."

Osomatsu closed the remaining distance before I could object, our lips pressing together awkwardly before he adjusted and slightly tilted his head

to the side. With our lips locked together, I couldn't verbally protest and resorted to pushing my hands against his shoulders, trying to make it clear that I wasn't ready for this.

After a few moments, Osomatsu pushed himself up and broke the kiss. His face was much more red than it was before, his eyes darting between my eyes as if he was trying to decipher what my expression was.

It was clear that he wanted to do it again.

I wasn't sure what to feel. It had felt...nice, his lips surprisingly softer than I expected.

My mother's voice screamed at me in my head, yelling that it wasn't normal for a boy to kiss another boy in sincerity. The kiss was what I would've expected to give a girl, but to receive it from a boy -- a classmate no less -- was stirring the same feelings...

I pressed myself up and kissed Osomatsu back, feeling him jump a little away from the contact before surging forward and forcing me to the ground once more, his legs adjusting over my body as his lips greedily sucked on my own. His fingers brushed my hair out of my face gently before trailing down to my sweater vest, cautiously pulling it up while ensuring the kiss continued.

A wet heat settled in my loins, the tightness growing uncomfortable as Osomatsu's waist rested right on top of mine, a familiar swelling occurring in his pants as well.

With my sweater vest pulled all the way up to my neck, Osomatsu shifted his lips off of mine and let his tongue slide across the skin of my neck, his fingers returning to the waistline of my pants and tugging out the bottom of the shirt. With my mouth freed, I clamped a hand over it to keep from making any loud noises as I felt my chest become exposed to the air, both the uniform button-up shirt and undershirt pushed up to just underneath the sweater vest. Osomatsu's tongue lifted from my neck and a heated breath glanced across my lips before we kissed again, his hands slipping

underneath my back and lifting me up into a sitting position easily, my legs draped on either side of his waist.

Shifting our weight back, I felt the cold wall against my back as Osomatsu used the new position to his advantage, his hands fully exploring my bare chest while our waists were still pressed together.

"(Y/n), are you sure about this?"

"You're the one that started it..."

He hummed a response before kissing me once more, pulling his lower half away for a moment while his fingers danced across my belt and zipper, pulling my pants down a little. I cried out into the kiss in surprise as he gently took my hardening member in one of his hands, freed from its cloth prison before it was caged in a much warmer grip. Osomatsu tilted his head and let his tongue slip between my lips, taking advantage of the previous cry to deepen the kiss even further.

A roll of pleasure sounded from my throat as he began to slowly pump his hand on my member, my own face heating up rapidly as I could feel him swelling in size at the same time.

"I'm sorry, (y/n)...I want to go further," Osomatsu pulled away from the kiss, the tone of his voice fighting between sorrow and heated desire. I lowered a hand to rest on his, slowing down the rhythm he had to a pace that I liked.

"I...want to go further, too, Osomatsu..." Gently undoing his pants, I freed his shaft and thumbed over the sensitive head, taking in a gasp when he reflexively tightened his grip. We stared at each other for a few seconds, our faces flushed red and our hands wrapped around the other before we closed the distance.

Osomatsu forced my hand off before gripping both of us in his hand, pumping us at the pace I had set while holding our members together. The sensation was vastly different from what I had done on my own, and he caught my mouth before I could make any noise. His index finger rubbed

light circles around my lower head, feeling the precum completely coat the surface before he squeezed a little bit harder and picked up the pace.

I was a mess underneath my classmate, my chest starting to be played with by his free hand while his legs kept me spread wide over him as his head pinned mine to the wall. I wasn't sure what to do with my arms anymore, simply letting them rest on Osomatsu's shoulders as he jerked us both off.

His breathing hitched at nearly the same time as mine, his hand pumping faster before I felt a hot spring coil in my loins, my waist thrusting against his freely before I lost control. His hand shifted to cup most of the orgasm, catching a majority of the sperm that was ejaculated.

"Didn't think about the mess afterwards..." Osomatsu laughed a little as he took off his jacket, wiping off his hand on the inside before tossing the garment aside. His focus was right back on me, "Since you've already been taken care of, it's my turn."

"...what?" I didn't understand what he was saying, but instantly understood his intentions when he reached underneath my softening shaft, my body instantly tensing up as I felt his finger prodding at my butt, "No, wait...!"

"You just gotta relax, (y/n)," Osomatsu kissed me again, the kiss sending a fire to my loins once more, "I'm going to be gentle with you."

"Why do I have to be the bottom...?" I moaned into the kiss, his hands pulling my pants down a little more to let him have more access.

"Because I told you that you were going to be the girl, remember?" He smiled into the kiss before speaking again, "It's because I want to show you how I feel and I don't think I can show it with you in me."

Another finger joined the first at prodding my non-entrance, some kind of wetness being rubbed down there before a finger slipped in. I gasped as I tried to relax, knowing that getting tense would only hurt Osomatsu when he tried to enter me. If I was a girl, then this whole thing would be much easier...but I wasn't, so I had to do what I could to make sure that it didn't hurt him.

My mother's voice screeched out in protest again, her words shouting that I was going to be disowned by the family if I was found out by a teacher, publicly shamed with a boy claiming me like a girl.

Osomatsu's panting silenced her mental shouts, my attention brought back to him as I felt him lift my waist a little higher. A sharp pain pierced my mind as he roughly pushed into me, both of us groaning at nearly the same time.

"I'm...trying, Osomatsu..." I answered his unasked question, forcing my rear to relax and trying to not tense up when I felt him slip in a little further.

"Ah, (y/n)...you're so tight..." His hands tightened on my waist for a moment before pressing his lips against mine, shoving himself in all the way shortly after.

It was rough but felt right at the same time, the feeling nearly indescribable. We both froze as the lunch chime rang out, sounding the time for students to get back to their classrooms.

"Well...?" Osomatsu let the question hang in the air.

"I'll...miss the next class."

"Look at you, becoming a delinquent," His smirk was at its full force, "What about your perfect attendance record?"

"I'm sure it won't take a huge hit from missing just one cla--Ah!" I whimpered as Osomatsu slightly pulled out, pushing back in just as much before making a rhythm of it. With his body pressing into mine, I wasn't moving anywhere and simply taking his length into me, the painful sensations slowly fading into pleasure as Osomatsu started to move a little faster and pull out a little further.

Wrapping an arm around the small of my back, he pressed a hand against the back of my head, pulling me in for another kiss as he continued to thrust into me. The momentum made us shift our weight and I slid down the floor again, Osomatsu on top of me. The shift in position allowed him easier

access as my legs spread as wide as my pants would allow them to go, the frustration growing on Osomatsu's face before he finally pulled them off completely, tossing them next to his jacket.

Breaking the kiss, he moved his head down to my chest, his tongue playing with an exposed and erect nipple while a hand teased the other. The movement between us became easier and more fluid as Osomatsu continued to pound into me, his girth starting to swell inside as his breathing hitched again.

"Ah, shit...(y/n)...!" His throat tightened, cutting off the cry of pleasure as he gave a few final thrusts before diving all the way in, unleashing his load inside. The warm fluid coated my insides and sent waves of pleasure racing up my spine, stars dancing in my eyes as Osomatsu tried to pull out, only to thrust back in as he dumped another load.

I covered my mouth to keep from screaming out in pleasure, Osomatsu finally pulling out completely and letting my body rest on the ground.

Silence filled the area as we caught our breath, the heat leaving our bodies to absorb the cold from the floor.

"So...that solved one uncertainty," Osomatsu laughed a little as he sat up, draping his jacket over his arm.

"And that is?" I carefully stood up and started to put my clothes back on, my voice shaky from the moaning. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Osomatsu stand up and adjust his own clothing before pulling my head up to face him, kissing me on the lips gently.

"I like you more than a friend."

Blind!Karamatsu and Ghost!Reader

People say that when you're murdered, it's usually at the hands of someone you know.

I couldn't help but stare at the twisted face of my murderer, his sweaty palms and fingers tightening around my neck as his strained breath hissed between his teeth.

Well...my physical neck which broke a few minutes ago, but I guess the fury in my murderer's mind created so much noise that he didn't even hear it or feel the hearty 'snap' when my vertebrae were wrenched away from each other.

I shifted to sit just above my head, watching the man pinning my body to the ground finally realize that I wasn't moving anymore. His hands pulled away from my kinked neck, the anger and fury slowly falling away into despair as the hands he used to kill me slowly reached underneath my torso, lifting my chest up and into his.

"No...(y/n), wake up..." His shuddering breath pressed into my limp shoulder, rubbing his head into the crook between my shoulder and neck, "Please...!"

"So, what did you want to do?" A similar voice called out behind me, the sound of shifting cloth announcing someone else's arrival. I barely glanced behind me to see someone in a dark black cloak, the deep-set hood pulled forward to cast a dark shadow over their face. A pair of glowing green eyes briefly met my gaze before looking just past me, slightly narrowing as they took in my body being cradled by my murderer.

I lightly hummed to myself as I stood up, looking back at the scene. The blue sweatshirt I once wore was dirtied from the soil underneath, barely

visible from the light of the nearby streetlamp. Glancing down at my actual self, I flexed my hands just to do the action. I couldn't feel anything grow tense or ache with overexertion, and I was definitely translucent now.

"I want to stay by his side," I turned towards the cloaked figure, meeting their green eyes, "What happened to him was my fault and

he

was justified in this."

I motioned towards the man now lifting my corpse up as I stressed the pronoun.

"Are you sure?" The cloaked figure reached out with a hand covered by something that looked like a wrist warmer, the color matching the sweatshirt on the man behind me.

"I know most of the rules," I nodded, "Just let me stay until he's able to move on."

"That could take years."

"That doesn't change my decision."

The cloaked figure sighed as if my words inconvenienced them. I waited patiently as they reached up with the same extended hand, slipping it underneath their hood and reaching towards the back of their head, "Fine. I'll fetch you when you're ready."

The figure vanished in a pillar of black smoke, leaving me alone in the street as the murderer carried my body somewhere. After watching him leave, I shifted my focus to the two-story house that was nearby, the lights completely out. Kicking myself off of the sidewalk, I awkwardly maneuvered myself to perch outside the sliding window on the second floor and passed through it. The room was dark and cold, several things kicked around and left on the ground haphazardly.

My eyes landed on a beaten up guitar case, seeing the nearly busted lock left open. Lifting the lid took no effort but I couldn't move the guitar nestled inside, only running my hand over the glossy wood surface and feeling the strings pass through my fingers. The strings partially responded to my touch, vibrating softly as I began to pluck at the strings and run my fingers over the frets like I was strumming a harp instead of a guitar.

I couldn't help but play one of his favorite songs, humming the lyrics softly as the guitar played along with my hands. I kept playing until the sun rose, leaving the guitar behind and closing the case before wandering downstairs to see an older woman hunched over the dining room table, her hands pressed against her face.

"...my sweet Karamatsu..." She took a deep breath and reached for a plastic bag, stuffed with a few containers that seemed heavy, adjusting her grip before walking towards the front door. I followed her out, staying just a little behind her as the older woman made her way towards one of the nearby hospitals.

Matsuyo Matsuno. The mother of six identical men and someone who seemed to care for me greatly when I was alive. She remained married to a man named Matsuzo and was a dedicated wife and mother to the family.

I lowered my eyes as we moved along. She was too old for this...Her sons were rowdy enough without what happened.

The automatic door slid closed behind Matsuyo and I pushed through, following her to the elevator and around the halls until she stood in front of a closed door. The name plaque next to it said 'Matsuno'. She opened the door quietly and closed it behind her, leaving me in the hall.

Gathering what little courage I had left, I phased through the barrier.

The technicolor sweatshirts of the brothers surrounded the bed, each of them passed out and sleeping against the mattress. Matsuyo gently woke each of them up and offered whatever was in the containers, the lids opening up to reveal freshly peeled pears. While their attention was diverted

for a moment, I moved towards the bed and looked down at its sole occupant.

A man with the same features as the others around him, despite the heavy bandaging wrapped around his eyes and arms. The hospital gown sat loosely on his frame, allowing the damaged areas to breathe and heal.

"Karamatsu..." I whispered, sitting near the foot of the hospital bed and gently putting a hand on his right knee. I felt him flinch a little, his head raising slightly and his mouth opening to try and say something before one of the other brothers interjected.

"These are some really good pears, Karamatsu. Did you want some?" The one in a red sweatshirt offered, moving to where I was sitting and taking my spot, a hand holding a small plate with the other holding out a slice of pear on a fork.

"Of course, Osomatsu!" The cheery voice of Karamatsu didn't match the beating that his face had taken, "I would love to have some."

I moved away from both Osomatsu and Karamatsu, lifting myself to sit on the wide windowsill and watch as the day passed by. The day passed into early evening as the younger brothers went home with Matsuyo, leaving the older three in the room.

"Karamatsu," Osomatsu spoke, tapping the side of the bed to alert Karamatsu of where he was, "We haven't heard from (y/n) since...this all happened. Ichimatsu had mentioned that he had seen her last night, but didn't say where she was. Are you

sure

that you're okay with her visiting?"

"She's my girlfriend and the one that I love," The smile on Karamatsu's face grew wide, "Why wouldn't I want her to visit?"

"It's just...that she was the one to make you go through this," The brother wearing the green sweatshirt added, "I don't think that she should be around you until she clears her name."

"You think that she planned this," The words from Karamatsu didn't form a question.

"Well, kinda?" Osomatsu rubbed the back of his head, "Everything about what happened was weird. She gets 'roughed up' by a gang, yet you're the only one that leaves the fight with...I don't really buy it."

"It wasn't staged," I whispered from my seat at the windowsill, "Karamatsu saved my life..."

"I don't think you have anything to worry about," Karamatsu gave a soft smile, "A man gives his life for his woman, regardless of the situation."

"You could've called the authorities, or had some sense of self-preservation kick in!" The green-clad brother shouted, startling Karamatsu and making him jump slightly at the raised volume.

"Choromatsu..." Osomatsu rubbed his face slightly before a vibration went off in his pocket, distracting him as he dug a cellphone out. His eyebrow slightly rose before he closed the phone and put it back into his pocket, adjusting his sweatshirt before clearing his throat, "Ichimatsu wants to talk to me about something. I don't know how long I'll be, Karamatsu, but I'll be back soon."

"If little Ichi wants to talk, then take your time. I'm not in a rush to go anywhere," He laughed a little as Osomatsu walked out of the room, leaving Choromatsu and myself behind with Karamatsu.

The silence grew as the third oldest fiddled with his hands and I moved from the windowsill to the other side of the bed, laying down without sinking into the mattress. I felt Karamatsu stiffen as I put my hand on his left arm, seeing him partially look over before turning to where Choromatsu was when he last spoke.

"Choromatsu...?"

"Hmm?"

"Is (y/n) here?" The question was soft, the tone tender. My eyebrows raised in surprise as I tried to tell him that I was here, right next to him, before my voice caught in my throat.

"...No, she's not," Choromatsu slightly tilted his head in confusion, "Like Osomatsu said, we haven't seen her since last week and the only person that's seen her since was Ichimatsu."

"Oh..." His light smile fell into a frown, a hand moving towards my own and passing through it as Karamatsu rubbed the skin where I touched him.

"I'm gonna head out real quick and grab something to drink," Choromatsu stood up from the seat near the table, the container of pears nearly empty, "Did you want something?"

"No, I'll be fine," Karamatsu waved in his general direction, setting his hand down when he heard the door close.

I wanted to hold Karamatsu close, to cry on his shoulder and beg him for forgiveness about the mess he ended up in because I couldn't handle myself. I wanted to scream to the heavens it wasn't fair that he was maimed because of me.

But I couldn't.

Rules had flooded into my head when I had closed my eyes for the final time and the cloaked figure was always going to remain close by in case I had swayed to either side of the After.

If I remained neutral about my death, then I could stay to watch Karamatsu...but if I became remorseful about the unfairness of it all or turned vengeful at my killer, the reaper's scythe would find my neck.

I moved from Karamatsu's bed to sit at the table with the pear containers, staring at the familiar fruit as he coughed into his unbandaged hand.

"(Y/n)."

I nearly jumped as my name left his lips, my eyes darting over towards his relaxed form and staring at his face that was directly pointed at my own. I was sure that we'd be staring at each other if those bandages were removed. My voice died in my throat, not able to respond to my own name.

"I..." He started before turning towards the window, the sunlight now filtering in and falling on him, "I wish you were here."

"I

am

here," The words left my lips, my body shifting into a standing position before I realized what I was doing, "Karamatsu..."

"...(Y/n)...?" His head lifted a little, slightly tilting as if trying to hear something.

Had he actually heard me?

I moved a little closer, maneuvering around to the right side of the hospital bed while he reached up to his right ear, his fingers brushing against the earlobe. Slowly, I lifted my hand to his, my fingers tracing along his own as I leaned in to press our foreheads together, mimicking what we used to do. I heard his breath hitch before his grip shifted, grasping at the air where my hand was.

"You're...not with us anymore, are you...?" I could hear Karamatsu's voice strain to speak past the lump in his throat, "Is this even you?"

"I'm here with you, that's all that matters," My other hand wandered to his left cheek, brushing the back of my fingers along his skin and feeling goosebumps form as I dragged my hand across. There was no doubt that his body detected me, but I had no way of knowing for sure if Karamatsu could hear me.

"If that is you, then know that I'm sorry I couldn't save you from whoever hurt you," Karamatsu continued when his voice was stable enough, "Though, I'm sure I know who did it..."

"Don't hate him for it."

"Let me just say this," He took a deep breath in before speaking, "He's...a good kid. Don't hold it against him, if he was the person to...kill you."

I pulled away from him, surprised. Karamatsu and I had dated for several years, but I never thought that he'd be this forgiving of something like this.

"I may just be talking to myself, but I can't shake the feeling that I'm right," A small smile crossed Karamatsu's lips, "I don't want you to hold it against Ichimatsu and I'll cross that bridge myself when he has the strength to tell me. But...I don't want you to become some horrible ghost that chases him down because of what he did. I mean, I'd understand why you'd want to...but please don't."

"I won't."

Karamatsu flinched, his head rising towards me with a slack mouth. His body shifted like he was about to get out of the bed before he seemed to settle to reach out towards my voice. I lunged for his unbandaged hand, grasping it tightly with both of mine before I realized that we were

touching

.

"(Y/n)...!" His grip shifted to grab my left wrist, pulling me close and wrapping his movable arm around me. I hiccuped as tears stung at the corners of my eyes, giving him a hug back before this sensation was taken away from me.

"I can't stay...I'll need to go soon."

"Just let me have this for as long as possible."

I couldn't tell him that another hand was on my right shoulder, the touch cold against my figure. I didn't want to let him go, but I knew that I'd have to.

He couldn't see her, but the scent of her favorite shampoo and the chill against his skin flooded his senses. He felt her grip tighten a little bit before pulling away, his hand dragging against her arm as she stood up from his hold on her.

There was someone else here, he could barely smell the stale scent of death hanging in the air, but somehow knew it wasn't there for him.

"(Y/n), I love you. I won't forget you," The words tumbled from his lips in fear of never letting her hear them ever again.

"I know you do and I know you won't."

The door to his room slid open as the voice of Choromatsu sighed in exasperation, the cold feeling vanishing in an instant.

"They were out of melon-flavored milk, so I got you some royal milk tea instead," Karamatsu heard a tray get pushed towards the side of his bed, a can being popped open before it was set down on the tray.

"Thank you,

brother

," He reached towards the can, feeling Choromatsu hold it in place until he had a good grip on it before pulling it towards his lips.

"Ah, shit. That looks like it hurt," Choromatsu sucked in a breath between his teeth, grabbing something paperish and dabbing it against Karamatsu's cheeks.

"Oh, was I crying?" Karamatsu reflexively flinched away from the touch before relaxing, not realizing that his brother was that close to his face.

"It looks like it. Most of the bandage seemed to absorb it, but it didn't stop all of it," Choromatsu clicked his tongue as he pulled the napkin away, "I'll let a nurse know so they can change the bandage..."

"You...didn't see anyone else when you came in, did you?"

"No. Why? Did someone else visit while I was gone for five minutes?" The third oldest sounded a little further away, probably by the table again.

"Maybe, but that's between them and I."

Magic!Karamatsu x Reader

Inspired by art from GUWEIZ (https://twitter.com/ttguweiz).

Shit...!

He swerved mid-air, pulling the customized broom harshly to the right as a blast of acid arched through the air where he used to be. It was the right call to leave his dragon companion behind on this mission, but he couldn't have predicted that it'd go

this

awry. Glancing behind him, his jaw clenched tighter as he pulled the broom up, just barely dodging the large maw closing in on the feathers of his broom.

The creature chasing him was a nuisance that he had been contracted to get rid of, successfully drawing it away from the village it plagued, but now he was running for his life when it broke through the trap that was supposed to keep it held down.

His partner had asked for time and that's exactly what he was giving her.

"Karamatsu,

NOW!

"

The man swiftly turned around to catch a glowing yellow orb, quickly changing the underhand catch into an overhand throw to toss the orb towards the monstrous creature. Just before the orb hit the monster's skin, it shattered and spread a thick wide yellow barrier, completely catching the creature and dragging it to the ground as it lost all momentum from flying.

A black figure that had been chasing after him darted after the caught creature, a hand holding their wide brimmed hat against their head as feathers trailed after them. Karamatsu made the broom go into a dive, following both the figure and creature.

The captured creature crashed into the forest below, the black figure following closely behind as the trees snapped and fell over from the collision.

"(Y/n), wait!" Karamatsu called out, trying to follow them without hitting any of the downed trees. He pulled up just before he hit the ground, urging the broom forward to where the creature had landed. The figure was already kneeling in front of the massive yellow web-like net, both of its arms held towards the creature with their hands splayed wide. A glowing colored magic circle enlarged with partially spinning, stopping the movement when it got to a large enough size.

Narrowing his eyes in both frustration and focus, Karamatsu threw up his own magic circle in front of hers, the blue color complimenting her own and growing to an even larger size, intending to magnify whatever spell (y/n) was casting.

Not even a few seconds later, several rays of colored energy poured from her circle into his own, growing in size and number before hitting the creature and swallowing it in a cocoon of light. The cocoon began to shrink, the color starting to splinter as black bursts of energy lanced outwards from within the cocoon, causing Karamatsu and (y/n) to take a few steps back in caution. Karamatsu let her focus on maintaining the spell while he looked more closely at the black energy, his eyes widening before reaching out to try and pull her away from the cocoon.

"Watch ou--"

His words died on his lips as a burst of black energy pierced through (y/n)'s form, sending her backwards onto the ground with a shocked cry.

"(Y/--"

"Finish it!" She yelled as her hands flew to where she had been hit, small magic circles forming between them and her body.

Karamatsu quickly raised his left hand towards the breaking cocoon, casting the same spell she had and holding it while taking a defensive position between (y/n) and the creature. The cocoon continued to shrink even more, reducing itself until it could easily fit in Karamatsu's palm. Grabbing a small hide bag tied to his belt, he scooped the cocoon into the bag and fastened it shut tightly.

Only then did he return his focus back to (y/n), rushing over and sliding to a stop on his knees next to her.

"Are you all right? Where are you hurt?" His hands hovered over her shoulders, midriff, and legs, unsure of what was damaged or what spell he should use. (Y/n) looked up at him with tears in her eyes, her hands trembling against her stomach as the magic circles faded.

"I'm dying..."

With a small flourish, she fell back onto the ground with her tongue comically lolled out to the side, a whispered 'bleh' escaping her lips as Karamatsu stared down at her with an expressionless stare. He kept looking at (y/n) until she slightly opened one of her eyes to look back at him before cracking a smile.

"Well, if you're dead, I get to keep your fee

and

your collection," Karamatsu smirked as he started patting down her 'dead' body, making her laugh and she fought off his hands with her own.

"Stop! Okay, okay, I'm not dead," She sat up, the clothes on her midriff not bearing any kind of damage. Karamatsu caught her shoulders in his hands as she moved, looking over her body intensely, "Karamatsu...?"

"I don't understand...you were hit," He looked back to her, confusion prevalent on his face.

"I don't know...I'm gonna go to the doctor when we get back to the academy, just to make sure," She reached over and adjusted his tricorn pointed hat, lowering her hand to rest against his scarred cheek. Karamatsu slightly leaned into it before reaching up to hold her hand, pulling her up from the ground as he stood.

"Sorry that my trap didn't work this time," He bent down and picked up (y/n)'s black witch hat, the point tied with string and accented with black raven feathers, brushing off the dirt on the wide brim before setting in on her head, "It was about time to get a new one, anyway."

"Glad I was here when it broke," She stuck out her tongue playfully as she adjusted her hat, "Ready to head back?"

"Yeah," Karamatsu walked back towards his broom, followed by (y/n) as she ran her fingers over her long cloak, feathers sprouting from the fabric and splitting the cloak in half down her back, "I'll go finish the contract while you get checked out."

"Sounds like a plan," She smiled as he climbed onto the broom, kicking off of the ground and launching into the air, following him in a trail of feathers as the feathered cloak formed wings.

"Here's your payment, as promised," The clerk smiled up at Karamatsu, putting the heavy coin bag into his extended hand, "Are you sure you're not overworking yourself? This is the seventeenth contract you finished this week."

"

Non, non

. I like to keep busy, plus the coin is always needed in caring for my dragons," Karamatsu flashed a brilliant smile at the clerk, tucking the coin bag into his belt before turning away and heading towards the medical ward of the academy, the smile fading into a worried look with each step.

He had kept a close eye on (y/n) on their return flight, noticing that she had faltered quite a few times in a spell that she had mastered years ago.

Something

had affected her and he could only hope that it could be healed by one of the mages in the ward.

The final turn in his warpath had him meet face to face with one of the teachers at the academy, the oversized wizard's hat much larger than the one (y/n) wore. The red coloring was unmistakable.

"Ah, just the guy I wanted to see!" The red wizard exclaimed, jumping down from his crystal orb transportation and wrapping an arm around Karamatsu's shoulder before he could get away.

"Oh? And why am

I

that guy?" He cast a sideways glance towards the wizard, trying to hide his worry.

"You know why..." The man's face twisted into a knowing smirk, "I need your help with the dragon race today."

"You don't need me for help, Osomatsu. You just want to know which dragon is in better condition for racing," Karamatsu rolled his eyes and shoved the wizard off of his shoulders, taking a few steps away from him, "I have somewhere to be right now."

"Oh...?" Osomatsu raised an eyebrow in curiosity, "Is this about your partner?"

"...partially. I owe her the cut I promised from the contract," He pressed a hand against the coin bag to ensure that it wasn't swiped from him. Karamatsu slightly paled as he recognized the teasing look that passed over Osomatsu's face.

"Are you sure that's the only thing?" The hat cast a shadow over some of Osomatsu's face as he tilted his head down a little, "A girl and a guy are going to be alone in the same room...who knows what could happen...?"

Karamatsu gritted his teeth. That night he drunkenly told Osomatsu his feelings towards (y/n) was

definitely

a mistake.

"Shove off--" Karamatsu pushed past Osomatsu, shoving the crystal orb towards the wizard as he passed, hearing Osomatsu grunt as the orb hit him.

As Karamatsu approached the room that the nurse said was (y/n)'s, the door opened up and revealed a fully dressed (y/n) stepping into the hallway, her hand on the handle to close the door behind her. Her black robes were cleaner than the previous encounter, the straps and lacings adjusted to hold the outfit more together while the feathers hung loosely from her hat and shoulders.

He didn't miss the downcast look on her face as she stared at the floor, "(Y/n)."

"Oh, Karamatsu," She looked up to him as a smile spread across her lips, "The doctor said that there wasn't much wrong with me. I need to eat more, but that's about it."

"And what about your magic?" He reached out and held her shoulders with both hands, "Did they do a full checkup?"

"Ah...about that," (Y/n) turned her head a little from him, "I'm under orders to not use magic for the next two weeks. Something about letting it fully

recharge."

"Two weeks? But that's--"

"Yeah, that's just after the deadline for my project," She looked back at him, her colored eyes torn between sadness and understanding, "I'll just have to talk to my professor about it. Maybe she'll understand my circumstances..."

"But...that's your Master's thesis! You weren't finished with the spell!" Karamatsu pushed his hand into his hairline, grabbing a fistful of hair in frustration while shoving his hat to the side.

(Y/n) was so close to finishing a spell that would open up her skills for more versatile transformations, finding the work in one of the older sections of the library. The spell had remained unfinished for almost a century before she was able to decipher some of the code that was used, and found out the true purpose of the spell.

If she couldn't use magic to complete the circle, or even cast it, then she was at risk for failing her master's course for the second time, which meant that she would be dismissed from the academy.

"...I know..." She lowered her head, the wide brim of her hat blocking her face from view, "Just...let me talk to the professor first..."

"Okay..." Karamatsu let go of her shoulder, relaxing his arms by his side as he looked down at her. Despite being a few years apart in age, he had enjoyed the time they were out on contracts together for his research. She had helped him accomplish a lot of things that were considered revolutionary in his research, so to hear that her capabilities were suddenly stunted because of something

he

asked her help for wasn't how he wanted to end the day.

(Y/n) was a smart young woman, a natural when it came to the field of transfiguration and transformation magic...and Karamatsu had just put her

entire career in jeopardy.

"Stop it."

He blinked down at her, realizing that (y/n) was looking into his eyes.

"I know that look. Stop it."

"I wasn't giving a look," He shook his head in an attempt to hide the growing blush.

"No, that was your 'I messed this up' look," She shifted her weight onto one leg, leaning a little to the side, "Before you start beating yourself up about this, let me see if there's an easy solution."

"Your professor...right. Sorry," Karamatsu tried to give a reassuring smile.

"I'll meet you back at the tower after I'm finished," She gave a small wave as she began to walk away, "I'm sure your companion needs some attention."

"Right," He returned the wave, "I'll see you there."

Karamatsu looked up from his couch as someone entered the room, a smile growing on his face as he recognized (y/n) in her more casual attire with her hair pulled into a loose ponytail.

"How'd it go?" He sat up and made some room on the couch for her to sit, putting his work onto the coffee table nearby.

"Just as strict as ever," (Y/n) sighed as she sat down, "I've got enough notes to create the rudimentary circle, but I won't be able to put the finishing touches on there."

"What if...I could do it?" Karamatsu leaned forward a little, gently running the back of his index finger down her left cheek, "I'm not as skilled in the transfiguration stuff as you, but I'm sure I could do it with your guidance."

"I'll think about it. The last time you helped me with something, it almost exploded in my face during the presentation," She gave him a chastising look.

"You asked for dragon blood and I gave the purest kind!"

"I asked for

young

dragon blood, not from the oldest line," (Y/n) rolled her eyes a little before poking Karamatsu's cheek with a finger, "Not everything in a spell needs to be of pure quality."

"You shoulda ashed for shpeshific shtuff," Karamatsu spoke with her finger pushing his cheek in, leaning away before grabbing her wrist and falling back onto the couch, the motion pulling her with him. She laughed as she fell onto his chest, "It's not my fault that I want to give you the best things."

"Sorry for thinking that you'd read my mind and understand what I was implying," (Y/n) stuck her tongue out playfully, holding it as Karamatsu touched it with his before pushing up further into a kiss. She ran a hand through his hair as they held the contact, only pulling away when they couldn't breathe anymore, "Hey...I thought that it wasn't a good time for you...?"

"Now, that's

your

fault for not reading my mind," Karamatsu whispered before sealing her lips in another kiss. Pulling his left leg up, he rested it against her core, smiling into the kiss as the motion drew a whine from her throat. Easing his way down her neck, planting smaller kisses along the way until his lips touched the sensitive area on her shoulder, lightly biting down on it. Her body pushed away from him only to be stopped by the leg he propped up earlier, her moans sounding more and more heated as he teased her skin with his mouth.

"Kara..."

His hands pressed against her bare back, snaking underneath the shirt and moving upwards towards her shoulder blades. The cloth lifted up her chest with the movement, catching underneath her breasts.

"No, wait--!" She tried to climb off of him, something snapping her out of the heated reverie as his hands traveled from her back to her chest, Karamatsu feeling something sharp rub against his right index finger before (y/n) managed to pull away from him. His eyes lowered to see something black lodged underneath her skin, an oblong object resting near her navel, the view cut off as she pulled her shirt back down.

"What...was that?"

"It's...nothing really, Karamatsu," She kept her head low as her fingers played with the hem of her shirt.

"I've slept with you for a few years, (y/n). I know it's not nothing," Karamatsu adjusted his position on the couch to sit next to her, "Please...tell me what it is."

(Y/n) looked conflicted before lifting the shirt up, allowing Karamatsu to see the object more clearly.

No...not an object.

A creature.

A leeching wyrm, to be precise.

The black tendrils underneath her skin started to twitch a little, growing outward by just a centimeter before stopping. Karamatsu leaned closer, his left index finger gently touching just outside the perimeter of the new growth, watching the center of the thing dig itself deeper into her skin. (Y/n) cried out a little in pain, but he did not move to cast a spell to help her.

Karamatsu heard of leeching wyrms before but never encountered them personally. It was a parasite that fed off of magic, completely consuming a living creature until there was nothing left before finally taking over and turning them into a breeding ground.

The monster that they had hunted down was one such unfortunate creature, the black energy carrying the seeds of the wyrm in a last attempt to carry out its purpose. It normally took the leeching wyrm about two weeks to go through its life cycle.

Two weeks...

Karamatsu's eyes widened with realization,

The doctor couldn't do anything

.

"When were you going to tell me?" He looked back up towards (y/n), meeting her uncertain gaze as she bit her bottom lip in nervousness.

"...I don't know. I wanted to see if I could remove it before you found out," She hid her face with her hands, the hem still clutched in her grip, "Karamatsu, I'm so sorry..."

"We'll find a way out of this," Karamatsu's right hand trailed around to the small of (y/n)'s back, rubbing the area lightly while pulling her towards him with the other.

The days passed slowly as Karamatsu took jobs that sent him all around the realm, trying to find ways to stop the leeching wyrm's progress while (y/n) focused her efforts at the library, searching for old books that could possibly help her remove the creature or kill it before it completely matured. Her school paperwork wasn't suffering from her predicament, finishing up the last projects and homework before digging into her textbooks and studying for the finals that were set to start next week. The guardian of the library

had approached her when she had set off one of his protection spells, partially convincing him that the 'foreign creature' he'd been detecting on her was a part of a final exam.

The leeching wyrm had spread its tendrils to cover her entire abdomen, now reaching upwards towards her breasts and downwards to touch her groin by the time the first week ended, the pain growing as the days ticked onwards. The herbal medicine that she'd picked up from the academy's gardener had stopped helping and he wasn't going to give (y/n) the stronger stuff until she had a note from a doctor stating that it was important for her wellbeing to take the higher doses. Karamatsu had managed to grab a few of the plants (y/n) told him about when he was out on contract work, able to dry them quickly enough for immediate use without using magic.

Compressing the herbs into small pills, both Karamatsu and (y/n) were able to find the right combination of ingredients to make the pain killers at a strong enough dosage for her to keep going to the library every day.

"Karamatsu...you're dating (y/n), aren't you?"

The blue mage turned to look behind him and saw a man wrapped in heavy green robes standing at the door to the dragon stables, a rather large golden key held in his left hand with a thick tome tucked under his right arm.

"Master Choromatsu, what brings you to the stables?" Karamatsu raised an eyebrow, fully facing the man.

"Answer the question. Are you or are you not with (y/n)?" The man's neutral expression didn't shift as he asked.

"Yes, I am," Karamatsu rested a hand against his hip.

"Then do you know about the parasite?"

Karamatsu stilled, his face fixed into an intense stare to try and read what the man was going to say next before slowly nodding his head, "Yes, I do. We're trying to find a way to get rid of it."

"Did she become infected while on a contract with you?" The gold key hanging from his hat jingled on its chain as Choromatsu tilted his head a little.

"...yes, but we're taking care of the problem," Karamatsu hardened his eyes, not leaving any room for doubt.

"...very well, then," The library guardian seemed satisfied with the answer as he turned around, "If my collections are put into danger by your actions, then I won't hesitate to remove the problem."

"There won't

be

a problem," The blue mage clenched one of his fists, trying to convince himself that he was right. There wouldn't be a problem because (y/n) was looking for a solution in the library while he was trying to find one outside the academy. He kept watching the green mage until he disappeared from his line of sight, turning back towards his dragon companion and busying himself with feeding and cleaning it.

(Y/n) had spent the evening of the next day unconscious on Karamatsu's bed, the latest exam requiring magic to pass. She had done very well, placing high in the course, but had paid for it when Karamatsu checked to see that the leeching wyrm had completely submerged underneath her skin as its tendrils spread around her breasts and down to her thighs, some of them starting to curl around to her back. He poured over every book and journal in his personal collection to try and find something that would slow the process, knowing that the leeching wyrm was a type of dragon, but there was nothing he could find. His fellow hunters had looked just as lost as he did when he spoke to them about it.

His hands tightened around the sides of his desk, tears falling from his eyes onto the old wooden surface and barely missing the books strewn about the desk. He had looked up everything from the phoenix's immortal blood to the rare unicorn's blood; nothing was giving him an easy answer.

Karamatsu had three days left before the two weeks were up, and (y/n)'s final for her master's class was tomorrow. If she used magic like she had to today, then she'd be shaving off hours from her life.

He let go of his desk, wiping away his tears and looking back towards (y/n)'s sleeping form, moving to sit next to her and lifting up her shirt a little. The black mass of tendrils spidering out underneath her skin couldn't be mistaken for anything else at this stage, his brow furrowing in frustration as he traced along one of the tendrils starting to wrap around her left side. Karamatsu pulled his finger away when he heard a soft groan roll from (y/n)'s throat, a frown creasing his lips downward as his hand shifted to rest against her cheek.

They had already entertained the idea of physically removing the leeching wyrm with non-magical surgery, but there wasn't anyone around that was willing to work with old-fashioned tools and scalpels. By the time the two of them thought of possibly doing a skin graft, the leeching wyrm had grown too large to perform one successfully.

Karamatsu leaned down and kissed her gently on the lips, pulling away before she began to stir and let her turn over onto her right side, standing up from his bed and stripping down for sleep. Once readied, he blew out the candles in his room as he headed towards the couch in the next room over.

The next morning greeted the small room in the tower, (y/n) up and walking around with a sleepy look on her face as she dressed herself and prepared for the day. Karamatsu knew that she had two finals to complete today, including her master's class, and had planned a small dinner for the night as a way to try and distract themselves from what was about to happen.

The people he contacted about certain types of wyrm or drake had gotten back to him with their negative answers for how he could help ease (y/n)'s suffering. There were rumors of things that could help, but it would take longer than the two remaining days to find them.

(Y/n) and Karamatsu agreed that he'd use the same trap on her to contain the leeching wyrm's seeds when the time came, but he didn't know if his resolve would remain resolute when he would be pressed to action.

The confident smile that he always gave her was starting to falter.

"Karamatsu!"

A voice shouted his name in the hallway as he walked towards the dragon stables, turning to see a frantic look on Osomatsu's face, the red wizard bearing down on him quickly on the large crystal orb.

"Oso--?"

"It's (y/n). Choromatsu has the library sealed up, but I managed to keep him from removing her," Osomatsu grabbed onto Karamatsu's upper arm and lifted the blue mage onto the orb as he slid off, reaching up and removing the plain-looking wand from behind his ear.

"What do you mean?" Karamatsu looked down in confusion before bracing himself as the wand extended into a long pool cue in Osomatsu's hands, the wizard not giving him much time as he lined up the cue with the orb.

"She's dying!"

The frantic tone of his voice gave Karamatsu pause before the cue hit the orb with full force, the crystal ball shooting down the hallway faster than he could fly. It zigged around corners and stairways before streaking into the plaza leading towards the library. Karamatsu could only stare in horror as he was sent closer.

The large building was completely locked down by Choromatsu, long translucent green chains wrapped around its entirety and hooking around a massive lock resting on the face of the building. As the crystal orb slowed down near Choromatsu, Karamatsu jumped off and rushed up to the library guardian, noticing the tense focused look on his face as the key that he normally used as transportation was aimed at the lock.

"You were 'taking care of the problem', were you?" The angry glare of the green mage shifted from the building towards the blue mage, only to be returned with the same ferocity.

"How many were hurt before you locked it down?" Karamatsu tossed his pointed hat to the ground, removing the belt that held a flame-retardant cloak and throwing it next to the hat. Choromatsu's angry glare shifted to a slightly neutral one.

"None. (Y/n) had sequestered herself to the back of the library before anything happened and everyone had been evacuated safely," The library guardian slightly turned the key to reveal a small door through the shell he was casting. Karamatsu dashed forward, slipping through the opening before he heard the spell seal behind him, opening the large library door to hear someone crying out in agony.

The massive library was a mess, books and scrolls strewn about like a wind spell had gone out of control. Desks and tables were moved while chairs had been either knocked back or pushed aside, probably from the occupants wanting to escape. Moving towards where he heard the cry, he passed through the older section for reference books and turned down one of the aisles to see a familiar form collapsed on the ground.

"(Y/n)!" He yelled out and moved closer, a stench catching his nose and almost making him gag. It reeked of rotten flesh, "(Y/n), it's me...I'm here with you."

"Karamatsu...?" Her voice was strained, as if she had torn her throat raw from yelling, "I...tried..."

"I know you did," Karamatsu inched closer, moving her hair away from her face as she was huddled on the floor.

Her skin was torn, as if something had burst out from the inside, creating small tears and rips through her exposed shoulders and arms. Blood dripped down into pools underneath her feet, the stream much slower than it had been to produce the volume he saw. The normally rosy skin was an ashen

color, the pigmentation lost as blood continued to drain from her. Some of her scalp had been ripped open, coating her hair with blood as well.

(Y/n)'s clothes didn't really survive the hatching event, shredding themselves wherever the leeching wyrm had escaped from. Karamatsu pushed past the smell and the visual, taking her gently in his arms as he knelt beside her.

"What do you need me to do?" He helped lay her down on the cool tile, moving her away from the pool of her blood. He couldn't hide the tremble in his voice or hands.

"Help...the others," She licked her lips before speaking, "I...tried to get as far away from them as...I could."

"(Y/n), you did great and no one was hit. The leeching wyrm birthed early, so there may be a way to save you...!" Karamatsu searched for a way to give his (y/n) some hope, something for her to hold onto, "We can heal you now...!"

"You suck at healing...and I don't have much left to cast from..." A skeptical look crossed her face as she held onto his hand, "I know that Choromatsu...has this place locked down...Can I borrow your magic...for my thesis?"

Karamatsu could only stare before nodding his head violently, grasping her hands and pouring as much magic into her as he could, feeling weaker as the seconds ticked by. (Y/n) grunted as her body began to glow a faint blue before the color partially mixed with her own magic, spreading from her body to the floor underneath them as a large and complex magic circle began to spiral outwards. Missing runes were filled in as she started to chant in some lost tongue, gasping in pain before she clenched her teeth and continued.

He felt her hands start to pop and shift against his own, refraining from pulling away as he kept feeding her the massive amount of magic she'd need to complete the circle. The soft skin cracked and hardened, her fingers

elongating as her hands completely encompassed his own before shrinking back down.

The shift was happening to (y/n)'s entire body, the cracks forming like a ripple effect.

Blue scales began to sprout from underneath her pale skin as her limbs snapped out of their joints and realigned as her body continued to shift. The chant was no longer coming from her mouth, but it still echoed around the two as if the library was finishing it for her.

Karamatsu began to feel faint, almost falling to the ground as he felt (y/n) let go of his hands, cutting off the siphon from him before he closed his eyes in fatigue. A warm pulse started to emanate from where (y/n) was, like a gentle heartbeat as the magic circle underneath them intensified in its light. A hum rolled through Karamatsu's body as he felt a force push him away from the circle, his hands trying to keep himself from moving further away but his exhaustion was too great to put up any notable struggle. The noise rose into a senseless cacophony, making Karamatsu weakly cover his ears with trembling hands.

After what felt like hours, the noise died down and Karamatsu opened his eyes to see a limp form laying on the ground where (y/n) had been. He scrambled to his knees and crawled over, his right hand reaching out and ghosting over the figure's skin, still feeling the spell's residual heat coming from the body. With a slow gulp, Karamatsu lay his hand on the form, rough scales meeting his skin.

"(Y/n)...?"

He moved around towards where her head had been, taking in a sharp breath when he saw the muzzle of a dragon instead of a human face.

"(Y/n)!" Karamatsu cried out as he lifted the dragon's head onto his lap, his experience kicking in as he pulled up the top lip to see the dragon's tongue and gums hold a normal pink coloration. The dragon was breathing normally and there didn't seem to be anything wrong with the creature from a preliminary glance. He could see that the rips in her skin had transferred

over to her new form, creating scars between the scales that dug deep into the new flesh. His left hand gently rubbed against the side of the dragon's neck, intending on waking the creature up, but there was no movement indicating it would ever wake up.

Karamatsu rested his head against the top of the dragon's head, his hand still moving along its neck.

"Come on...I know you're still with me, (y/n)," He moved a little closer to the beast, allowing him to lean against it while still supporting its head. The dragon's breathing hitched before it took in a deep breath, lifting its head from his lap and looking around the area with a slow blink. Its long ears flicked forward while the eyes seemed to recognize where it was, looking back down towards Karamatsu.

"Guess my girlfriend's a dragon, now."

The ears pinned back as the dragon leaned down and pushed its head against Karamatsu's chest, a soft rumble rolling through its throat like an imitation purr. He couldn't help but give a small laugh as he ran his hands over the scales.

With the dragon's passive regenerative abilities, (y/n) intended to wait out the fatal injuries in this new body. She'd turn back when she was ready.

Mafia!Karamatsu x Reader

Inspired by ara_jhoo's prompt.

Why did I agree to this?!

The room was quiet, divided into eight lanes with tall dividers between the waist-high countertops of each lane. I was led by a man in black slacks and a partially unbuttoned blue shirt with the long sleeves rolled up to his elbows, following him into one of the lanes and watching carefully as he set down the small box of bullets and carrying case. He took one of the rather large earmuffs hanging from his forearm and held it out to me, a gentle smile on his lips as his dark hues met my own colored ones.

"You're going to need these."

"Okay..." I took the hard earmuffs from him and settled them over my ears while he unlocked the carrying case, revealing a black pistol and magazine sitting perfectly on dark gray foam. Swallowing the sudden accumulation of saliva in my mouth, I watched as he took the magazine and began loading it with the bullets from the box, setting it down on the counter along with the empty pistol.

"You're going to be okay, (y/n)," His gentle words didn't bring much comfort as I put on the safety glasses, uncertainty plainly on my face.

"How can you be sure, Karamatsu?"

"Because I'm right here," He took a small step back and pulled me to where he was standing before, "I'll show you the safest way to handle a pistol."

He talked me through in explicit detail about the correct way to pick up the pistol, how to ensure that the chamber is empty, and how to load the gun. The weapon weighed a little more than I thought it would, paying close attention to what Karamatsu was talking about and following his instructions. His hands hovered over mine as he instructed me on a good

position to fire from, the pistol aimed straight out from my chest with my arms nearly fully extended.

Karamatsu's voice was soothing to listen to, his movements and words making me feel a little bit more confident about the deadly weapon clenched between my hands. His instructions moved me slowly through the process of a proper grip on the pistol, what to expect when I fired it, and how to recover from the blowback.

"Ready to shoot?"

"No..." I couldn't hold back the whine in my voice. I wasn't entirely comfortable with this idea in the first place, but I knew that it needed to happen. It was better for me to have some knowledge of how to defend myself than to remain a helpless target, "...but let's do it."

Karamatsu had already set up a paper target for me to aim at, hanging about twenty meters away from the booth I was at. He moved to stand a little behind me, giving me the go-ahead to start firing. I squeezed the trigger, feeling the pistol slam back into my palm as the force rocked down my arms and into my shoulders. The gun didn't jump from my hands like I feared and I didn't go flying backwards.

"Whoa...!"

"Nice first shot," I quickly glanced at the paper to see that the bullet never hit it, "Try keeping your arms a little higher up. Everything else looked pretty good."

Karamatsu's hands helped level my arms out to where they should be, much higher than I was for the first try. He cleared me for another shot, my finger squeezing down on the trigger and my stance absorbing the recoil of the pistol. The target had a small hole near the humanoid's shoulder.

I didn't hear him tell me to stop, so I kept firing until the magazine was empty, following his instructions on ejecting the magazine and ensuring the chamber was empty before laying the pistol flat on the counter.

"You did so well, (y/n)!" His large hands pushed the safety glasses and earmuffs up from my head, a wide smile spreading his lips into a grin as Karamatsu pulled me in for a hug. I returned the affection, my heart fluttering from excitement at his expression, "I'm so proud of you."

"Can...that be it for today?"

"Of course," Karamatsu let me go, swiftly putting everything away into its place before pushing a button on the side of the shooting lane, the paper target racing closer along a track. When it stopped over the counter, Karamatsu unclipped the target and handed it to me, "Want to keep it?"

"Oh...no, I'm good," I had fired seventeen shots, yet the paper only showed five holes. I really wasn't sure why Karamatsu was so impressed.

"Then I'll keep it. Throw it in a frame and hang it in my office to show off," Karamatsu had a thoughtful look on his face as he glanced over the paper target.

"You probably shouldn't..."

"Why not?"

"...because it'll make you look bad," I muttered as I lowered my gaze, shame settling on my face.

Karamatsu's office within his family's mansion was well-decorated with marksman trophies and various awards he'd won through tournaments, using the free time he had to keep his skills sharp and showing he was probably one of the better shooters in the country. My pitiful five-out-of-seventeen target would be a marr on his reputation, something he really couldn't afford to ruin.

"I don't think it will," Karamatsu folded up the target and tucked it underneath his arm as he gathered the bullet box and pistol carrying case, leading the way out of the empty shooting range. Closing the door behind me, I followed him through the long hall before it connected to the central hub of the mansion's west wing, holding most of the necessities the family

needed to keep in physical shape. I could hear grunting and metal clinking from the weight room, keeping my focus on the tiled floor as Karamatsu walked through the west wing into the main section of the mansion.

Voices grew louder as we passed the kitchens and galley, hearing men laugh and call out to each other while they were eating. Walking through the lavish front hallway to the front doors, I fought down the urge to reach out and hold onto the back of Karamatsu's shirt for protection.

Just because I've been dating him for a few months didn't mean that I was no longer nervous in his family's home. I still felt like I didn't belong there, despite the many times that Karamatsu promised that I was more than welcome in the mansion. It still didn't feel real.

Karamatsu and I had literally bumped into each other on the street while I was on my way home from work. I had apologized profusely, instantly recognizing who he was, as well as the other sextuplet brother he was with. The blue- and yellow-clad brothers were always hard to miss whenever they walked the length of the street.

I had expected some kind of punishment from the brothers, and definitely not the smile I received from Karamatsu. Jyushimatsu hadn't really paid attention to me during the exchange of apologies, and Karamatsu shattered what I had pictured in my head about how the Matsuno family was like. The sextuplets were talented in each field that they specialized in, almost competing with each other with their victories and jabbing at the embarrassing losses.

The head of the family was Osomatsu, sometimes letting Karamatsu take the reins when his attention was demanded elsewhere. Underneath him was Choromatsu, the diplomat who mainly worked behind the scenes to keep everything smooth. The youngest brother, Todomatsu, was the head of intelligence, ensuring that he had info about everyone's whereabouts while they were out of the mansion and gathered intel on the other rival mafia families. Jyushimatsu and Karamatsu were the muscle of the family, often being called on when a point needed to be made or when the Matsuno's presence in an area needed to be felt. Ichimatsu was the reclusive doctor that was in charge of keeping his brothers and their hired help healthy

enough to keep working, keeping to himself when he wasn't called on for his other skill of sharpshooting.

I often wondered why Karamatsu wanted to pursue a relationship with

me

.

I wasn't pretty or beautiful by society's standards, and my life had been divided between work and home. My social life was almost nonexistent since my old friends had moved on with their lives, getting married and having kids, or pursuing their dream careers, while I was still living the single life and working a meager job that kept food on my table.

"--/n)?"

I glanced up to Karamatsu, realizing that he had been calling me, "Sorry...lost in thought."

"That's all right," He gave an understanding smile, "I was just wanting to make sure that you didn't forget our date tomorrow night."

"The theater," I confirmed with a nod, "I wouldn't forget that."

His dark hues swirled with happiness as his smile shifted upwards, "I'll pick you up from your apartment around 3 p.m."

"Right. I'll see you then," I turned towards him as we walked through the main front door, giving him a light peck on the cheek before rushing down the stairs and into the waiting taxi that Karamatsu had arranged for me. My face felt hot to the touch, pressing my palms against my cheeks as I gave my home address to the driver. I couldn't help but glance back to the Matsuno mansion, seeing Karamatsu wave me off before the oldest brother emerged from the doorway. They seemed to engage in conversation before Osomatsu pulled the folded paper target from underneath Karamatsu's arm, quickly unfolding it before he could grab it back as a wide smirk spread on the oldest's face.

I stood in the parking garage, my legs trembling as I unclasped the helmet and pulled it off my head, glancing back at the man locking up the motorcycle that had served as my ride to the theater. The bright blue coloration of the paint matched the color that spread across his black biker jacket in a wing-like pattern, realizing that I was blushing and turning before Karamatsu saw me.

"I told you that it would be safe," The confidence in his voice was unshakable, looking back to see him stand next to me, his broad hand slipping into my own, "She's a very gentle ride."

"I just...expected a taxi or something," I laughed nervously, following Karamatsu's lead as he began to walk towards the theater down the street.

"I know you were. That's why I wanted to surprise you," His thumb slid over mine in reassurance, "I wanted this date to be memorable for you."

"Well, I'll definitely remember it."

Karamatsu's laugh echoed through the parking garage before we left the sheltered space, the noise of the city around us creating an atmosphere that some people came to love. Moving through the dense rush hour crowds, he kept a strong grip on my hand and led me through while keeping a slow enough pace so I could keep up without being pulled along. The crowds became a little thicker as we neared the large building, falling into line as people filed into the front lobby of the theater.

I saw posters for current and upcoming shows, spotting one of my childhood favorites among the lineup and secretly hoping that I could save up enough money to see it before it was taken out of the rotation. Since the tickets were usually sold at premium prices, it was going to be quite a while before I had enough for just the ticket.

Karamatsu pulled out his wallet and slid two tickets towards the ticket booth, the thick paper getting punched and marked before being handed back to him.

"Enjoy the show," The clerk stated before asking for the next person in line, leaving Karamatsu and I to enter the lobby proper. Several booths were set up with various merchandise of the show playing tonight.

"Karamatsu, you didn't--" My jaw dropped when I realized the show was the same one that I had wanted to see, eyeing the limited edition merchandise being displayed.

"I saw this on your 'goal' wall, so when the show started touring here again," Karamatsu smiled at my stunned reaction, "I knew I had to bring you."

"Oh my gosh...thank you so much," I gave him a quick hug, still cognizant of the crowded space and the unwarranted public attention, "You really didn't have to do this, you know..."

"I do, but I wanted to," He gave a soft kiss on my forehead before pulling away, a smile on his lips, "You don't have to be modest here. If there's something you want, let me know."

"Okay..." My voice grew soft as I eyed the merchandise one more time, looking over the soundtracks in their jewel CD cases, the limited run posters of various characters from the show, and banners that displayed unique designs. The fangirl in me screamed for everything, but the considerate side of me came out in full force to counteract what I desired. Yes, I did want a few things, but I wouldn't dream of using Karamatsu's money for it.

"That book, then?" Karamatsu asked in my ear, leaning down to see what I had been staring at for the past few moments.

The book he was talking about was a behind-the-scenes look at how the show was produced and brought to life from a script, including interviews from the original cast, pictures of the stage backdrops while it was being built, an up-close look at the costumes, and everything that a fan would want to know about their favorite show.

I could only nod, watching him advance towards the table and pay for the large book. He spoke with the cashier about something before they slid the purchased book into a plastic bag, writing something on it and attaching a receipt to the handles. Karamatsu strode back with a copy of the receipt in his hands and looked over at me with a gentle smile.

"They'll hold onto the book for us and we can pick it up when it's over."

"Thanks, Karamatsu," I started to reach into my purse, "How much do I owe you?"

"No need to worry about it," His index finger curled under my chin to distract me from digging out my wallet, his lips sealing against mine for a brief moment before he offered a sincere smile, "Let's go get our seats before it starts."

The curtain fell after the cast took their final bow, the applause slowly dying as conversations picked back up with exclamations of praise and mutterings of criticism. I turned in my seat to Karamatsu, my happy smile fading quickly when I saw a pensive look on his face.

"Kara...?"

My voice seemed to snap him out of his mindset, "Oh, sorry, (y/n). I let myself get distracted by something."

"Is everything okay?" I gently lay a hand over his, feeling him turn over his hand to hold mine in response.

"Yeah, it's all good."

"All right," I tried to give a reassuring smile, not missing the hardened look in his dark eyes.

Something

was bothering him, but I wasn't going to force him to tell me. If he didn't think I needed to know, then that was it, "Ready to go pick up the book?"

"Yeah," Karamatsu let go of my head and dug out his wallet, holding out the receipt, "Go ahead and grab it. I'll be in the bathroom for a little bit."

"Okay," I gave him a kiss on the cheek before I felt his hand on the back of my head, pulling me back in for another kiss on the lips.

"I shouldn't be long."

"Well, I hope not. The line for the men's room isn't like the one for the women's," I laughed a little, gripping the receipt tightly and heading back towards the booth that the book was purchased at. The line in front of the booth was much larger than the one before the show, my thoughts giving a silent thanks to Karamatsu for his foresight. It moved slowly as people were buying multiple things at once, the conversations in front and behind me all talking about how this was their 'x'th showing or the cast changes from the last time they were here.

I quietly asked for the reserved copy of the book, showing the cashier the receipt before receiving the thick item. As I looked around the lobby, I realized that most of the people had already cleared out to leave only a handful of people still hanging around, most of those were in groups that seemed to be waiting for people in the bathrooms. Carefully making my way towards the section that Karamatsu and I had sat in, I heard some grunting sounds that seemed out of place in a theater.

My face flushed until I heard the crack of skin-on-skin contact.

Someone was fighting.

The noises were coming from down a hall, the sign indicating that it was towards the private boxes. Biting my bottom lip, I quickly took out my phone and sent Karamatsu a message saying that I had gotten the book, not wanting my gut instinct to be correct. If he wasn't in a fight, he usually responded within a minute.

The little bubble that indicated the other person typing never appeared after two minutes, the fighting noises continuing the entire time. Shoving the

book and phone into my purse, I carefully made my way towards the sounds and stopped when the hall split into a T-intersection.

"--king warned you to not be here."

"Suck my dick, Matsuno!" Another crack followed by a grunt. "You're a bunch of shits!"

I sucked in a breath full of fear. Unless another brother was here, it meant that Karamatsu was in a fight.

A cry of agony sent my nerves screaming, recognizing the pain in Karamatsu's voice. Another noise entered the fray, metal hitting metal before something skidded to a halt against the wall I could see.

A black pistol -- the same one that I used for shooting yesterday. It was Karamatsu's favorite firearm.

He was weaponless!

Emotions ran wild as I bolted for the pistol, picking it up and aiming it down the hall it came from, seeing Karamatsu pinned to the ground by another guy.

Both men were bleeding, a knife held by the stranger as he pushed it downwards, the blade only centimeters above Karamatsu's throat as Karamatsu was struggling to keep the knife away from him. Neither of them were focused on me.

"S-stop!" My voice shook as I shouted the command, drawing the stranger's attention. The pistol was heavy in my hands, sweat making the grip feel like it was about to fall, yet I kept the iron sights aimed at the man's chest.

"Is this your whore for the night?" The stranger laughed before returning his full attention towards Karamatsu, "And here I thought you were losing your touch."

"Get...off of him!" I curled my index finger against the trigger, not pulling it fully in hopes that the threat would be enough.

"(Y/n), run!" Karamatsu shot a furious glare at me and I faltered for a moment before I heard loud footfalls to the right of me, glancing over to see a shadowed figure sprinting towards me. Karamatsu's pained cry drew my attention back towards the struggle, my eyes widening in fear as the knife found its mark near the top of Karamatsu's shoulder. The strange man used the stabbing's momentum to push himself towards me, adrenaline rushing through my system as Karamatsu's calm voice from yesterday echoed in my head.

'

Keep your arms up.

'

My finger reflexively pulled the trigger as someone's hand covered my eyes, the clammy skin shutting the light out as two loud bangs echoed in the hallway. The pistol was knocked out of my hands before an arm held me close, their breathing coming out labored as silence fell over the area. The fingers remained over my eyes as my hands gripped the thick fabric sleeve holding me against the person, struggling to form any kind of thought and only wanting something to ground me.

"Karamatsu, status."

The voice came from the person holding me, his voice stern and precise despite the deep breaths he was taking. A groan was Karamatsu's response before something hit the carpeted ground.

"Gonna need this looked at by Ichimatsu, but otherwise fine...nothing that sleeping won't take care of," My boyfriend's voice came closer, "Did you get her in time?"

"...what's going on...?" My voice was weak, fear overriding my nerves as a dark thought began to settle:

I had either shot Karamatsu or killed the attacker

, "...what did I...?"

"Take her home," The hand over my eyes lifted briefly, allowing me to see Karamatsu standing right in front of me and Choromatsu at my back, "I'll take care of things here."

Karamatsu only nodded before guiding me out of the hallway the same way I came in, his arm pressing against my shoulders so I couldn't lean back.

"Karamatsu...what did I--"

"It was my mistake, (y/n)," Karamatsu heaved a sigh, lightly groaning as he rubbed his free hand around the wound in his shoulder while leading me deeper into the theater, away from the front lobby, "I noticed someone who shouldn't have been here during the show and alerted my brothers so I didn't have to take care of the problem myself. He cornered me when I was heading towards the lobby and the argument spiraled out of control."

Pushing down a bar lever on a door labeled 'Alley Exit Only', Karamatsu guided me out of the building and towards the entrance of the alley where an unmarked white van had its side door open with the familiar form of Ichimatsu waiting beside it.

"...just you?" The younger brother glanced over Karamatsu's wound before casting his gaze at me.

I could only nod, the shock still rushing through my system.

"I'll drive us back," He ushered us into the van before closing the door.

"But what about--"

"One of the guys will pick up the bike," Karamatsu tried to finish my question before I shook my head.

"No, Karamatsu!

Did I just kill a man?!

"

The air in the van went still as Ichimatsu drove through the city streets. Karamatsu sighed before looking over at me, his eyes soft with kindness.

"No, you didn't."

"But..." My eyes went wide in shock.

"I didn't want you to see what happens when someone is shot with a pistol at close range," Karamatsu rubbed the back of his neck uncomfortably, "It's not like what you see in movies."

A soft roll of laughter echoed from Ichimatsu before he interjected into the conversation, "The cleanup isn't as easy as the medical dramas, either..."

I furrowed my eyebrows, diving into my thoughts as the brothers chatted back and forth about how they sometimes laugh at the dramatic shooting scenes in movies. My hands were still clean of someone else's blood...but seeing Karamatsu wounded and pinned underneath an attacker had provoked a desire. I clenched my fists before pressing them into the bench seat between Karamatsu and I, fully facing him with a serious look on my face.

"I want to learn how to shoot."

"Uh-what?" Karamatsu recovered from laughing, thrown off by the sudden change in topic, "I thought you didn't want to do it anymore...?"

"I want you to be able to rely on me if that happens again. I don't want to run or sit on the sidelines being useless anymore," I took a breath, "I want to know how to incapacitate someone using a pistol."

The shocked look on Karamatsu's face slowly morphed into a flustered look, his right hand raising to hide his cheeks and mouth. Ichimatsu must've looked back at his brother's reaction, a rolling laughter coming from his chest as Karamatsu's face grew more red.

"What? What's so funny?" I shifted a confused look towards Ichimatsu before feeling Karamatsu's hand on my shoulder, looking back towards him, "Kara...?"

"I'd be happy to help you, (y/n)," His hand shifted to pull me alongside him, Karamatsu's lips kissing my forehead before his cheek rested against it, "Just give me a day to recover, then we'll get started whenever you want. Ichimatsu?"

"...what."

"Make this a scar," Karamatsu gave a wide smile while pointing to the knife wound on his shoulder.

"...freak."

CatNoir!Karamatsu and Ladybug!Reader

Inspired by _yaoyoro_'s prompt.

I bit my bottom lip nervously, my right index finger hovering just above the doorbell marked as 'Matsuno'.

It was simple. All I had to do was push it in and reunite with a dear childhood friend, then everything else would play itself out.

At least...it sounded simple, but this 'simple' thing had kept me from asking for a few weeks.

I pulled my hand away before turning towards the stairwell, intending on going back to my own apartment a few floors up. My feet took the flight of stairs a few steps at a time, practically leaping up the stairwell to the safety of my own floor.

On the second landing, I barely saw someone turning around the same corner, shifting my weight too far back and feeling my right foot land on the landing edge at the wrong angle. The sudden change in momentum nearly had me fall back down the stairs I just jumped, my hands reaching out for anything to grab onto. A strong hand grabbed onto my left wrist and I instinctively held onto theirs with my left hand, my back slamming into the handrail on the wall but not falling down the staircase.

"Ahh...!" I clenched my teeth and sucked in a breath as pain shot up my leg, feeling the awkwardly-landed foot twist harder into the extreme angle. Without warning, whoever had saved me from a bad fall yanked me towards them and shifted their arms to rest underneath my knees and shoulders, scooping me up.

"Are you all right?" Their voice rumbled through their chest, the vibrations against my left arm.

"Yeah...I think it's just a twisted--" I looked up to see the aged face of one of my childhood friends, the thick manicured eyebrows rising a little as his dark eyes seemed to register my face as well, "...ankle..."

"(Y/n)...?"

I quickly looked over his features, knowing that he was definitely one of the sextuplets but unsure which one, "...yes?"

His grip shifted on my body, bringing me closer into a hug as a smile spread his lips wide, "(Y/n), it's so good to see you! It's me, Karamatsu!"

"Kara...matsu?" The name registered a face, old memories surfacing of a boy running around and getting into trouble, dragging most of his brothers down with him as his bad luck kicked in. I gave a burst of surprise laughter as I wrapped my arms around his neck, giving him a hug in return before realizing he was still holding me up on the stairway landing, "<

It's been so long, Karamatsu! How have you been?>

"

"<

I've been doing well, (y/n)>

," He laughed back and gave another squeeze before gently setting me down, keeping an arm around my shoulders as I adjusted to the twisted ankle, "<

I'm sorry that I haven't stopped by to say 'hello'. I thought I recognized your last name on the mailbox, but I've been busy with the modeling...>

"

"<

You've been modeling?>

" I raised an eyebrow as Karamatsu bent down a little to slide his hand from my shoulder to my right hip, pressing my left side against his body and letting me lean against him as he guided me up the stairway, taking each step as slowly as I needed to, "<

I thought you would've had a chance in Tokyo...not here in Paris...>

"

"Your Japanese is still awful," Karamatsu laughed.

"Oh, did I switch?" I raised a hand to my lips, an embarrassed flush spreading over my cheeks, "Sorry...I guess that I thought it would've been easier for you to understand me if I spoke Japanese..."

"I've had to learn French in order to work here, so hearing my native language was a little startling," Karamatsu lightly grunted as he helped me up the last step, "But no worries! Your native language is just as beautiful."

Without provocation, he helped guide me towards my apartment, my fingers already pulling out the lanyard hanging around my neck to single out the door key.

"Are you sure? We don't talk too fast for you?"

"Of course not!" Karamatsu responded just as quickly as I asked, "I already had a few words mastered, but it did take a little while to catch up in speed. Everyone was pretty understanding about it, though."

Hobbling with Karamatsu's assistance over to my apartment, I slid the key into the lock and turned it, hearing the mechanism shift into an open position before turning the doorknob. Pushing the door open, I revealed the mess that my apartment was in as I used the wall to walk in further as Karamatsu remained outside.

"Do you need help?"

I looked back to see him awkwardly looking at the door frame, stifling a laugh, "Sure, come on--"

A thunderous clap of sound echoed through the air, piercing the muted sounds of the city and making me jump, startled by the sudden noise. Karamatsu and I turned towards the skyline of Paris, seeing flashes of lightning streak up into the sky from the ground only a few blocks away.

"What is that?!" Karamatsu placed his hands along the walkway railing, leaning forward a little. Another brilliant streak of lighting jolted up from the ground before a loud clap of cacophonous thunder sounded, my hands racing to cover my ears.

My heart panicked as I glanced at Karamatsu, knowing that I couldn't risk him finding out about my secret...the same secret that was holding me responsible to save the people in danger by that strange lightning storm. Shifting my colored gaze down to my ankle, I opened my mouth to speak before Karamatsu turned around.

"Stay here, (y/n)," He put one of his hands on the doorknob, "I'm going to make sure that everyone's okay."

"No, Kara! Wait!" I tried to reach out to keep the door from closing, stumbling to my knees instead and sending another jolt of pain up my right leg with the collision. The door pulled itself closed and I looked towards the small purse sitting on the dining table nearby.

A small creature looked back out at me, her blue eyes regarding my form with concern as she zipped over to me and resting her tiny hands on my right calf, "(Y/n), you can't move like this."

"People need our help, Tikki," I leaned on the left-side wall, using it to stand back up, "And I need your help."

"But you'll have less time than normal...!"

"It'll be fine," I offered my hand for the creature to stand on, her light form barely hovering above my palm, "If Cat Noir is close by, then I'll have help

and this will be over much faster."

The little red creature pulled back a little before nodding. I lightly rested my right foot on the ground and took in a deep breath.

"Spots on."

Karamatsu had an unsettling feeling for most of the day, the gut-feeling disappearing for a moment when he realized that one of the names on the communal mailbox was similar to his childhood friend's. He hadn't found her at home, but bumped into her accidentally on the staircase.

"I can only hope that she's all right..."

He had donned his Miraculous, fully transforming into a superhuman labeled as Cat Noir when he was out of sight. Now jumping through the air across rooftops, the only thing on his mind was stopping whoever was causing this.

A bolt of lightning struck through where he just was, the metal buckle of his tail glowing with heat and sending Cat Noir skittering across a flattened roof area, his claws digging into the tile to stop himself.

"Come out and play, kitty kitty!" A mocking call sounded from the street below, drawing Cat Noir's attention down to the walkway while using the high-walled railing as cover, "Don't worry! I won't pull on your tail or anything!"

Cat Noir's green eyes widened as he looked down at the humanoid figure glaring up at him, barely ducking down in time to avoid a lightning bolt. The person was completely clothed in a black long-sleeved coat, his left hand tightly gripping a black polished baseball bat with jagged nails hammering into its length. A black baseball hat rested on the man's head, completely covering his hair from sight while tucked underneath the coat's hood, a light gray decal marking out curled ram horns on either side of the

hood. The lip of the rim on the hat was pierced through with three silver rings, mimicking the same coloration as the nails.

"If you don't come down here to play, I'll come get you myself!" The man's voice drawled in a familiar tone, teasing Cat Noir while tapping the baseball bat against his shoulder.

"Who are you? Did Hawk Moth send you?!" Cat Noir called out, hearing a feminine grunt on the other side of the rooftop. He glanced over to see Ladybug crawling towards him on her hands and knees, her signature yo-yo clipped at her side. Her colored hair was tied into a small bun near the back of her neck, and her eyes met his in a brief look before shifting over towards who was talking up at him.

"Hawk Moth? Oh, that old-sounding guy talking to me in my head?" The man shrugged before pointing the bat towards the two superheroes, "If I give him your whatchamacallits, then I get to have more fun."

"The Miraculous," Ladybug frowned as she whispered, barely peeking her head over the edge before a bolt of light arched towards her, colliding with the railing and sending her falling back to avoid getting hit. Cat Noir frowned as the 'lightning bolt' had a more reddish color to it up close, the edges of it more red than the light orange center of the bolt.

"Wanna circle around?" He made a small circular motion with his finger.

"You're faster than I am. Go ahead and catch him from behind, I'll aim for that bat," Ladybug briefly shook her head.

"All right," Cat Noir nodded and scampered towards the opposing edge of the roof, looking at Ladybug before she leaned over the railing once more, dragging the villain's attention before jumping off towards the neighboring roof. Another arch of fire hit where Ladybug appeared, a disapproving sound coming from the guy below.

"Are you guys just gonna chit chat up there?" Cat Noir glanced down to see the villain crouch before leaping up and grabbing onto the damaged railing of the roof.

I gasped and scurried away from the railing as the villain sneered down at me, his eyes glowing a fierce red as the hood pulled away from his hat to reveal two upward curving horns, the same color as his eyes. With a much closer look, I could see two black markings trailing over his cheeks and coming to a point just underneath his eyes.

"Just you, then?" His pointed teeth opened in a menacing grin before his eyes swept around the empty roof, settling on me once more as I hastily stood up and started swinging the yo-yo as a defensive shield, "Fine by me..."

"Who are you?" I took a step back, settling my weight on my left foot.

"The old man called me Rider," His shoulders moved a little in flattery, "For a Frenchman, he sure knows how to talk my language."

Rider swung the bat towards me, the yo-yo string catching the bat in its arc and twisting around it. Pulling the bat from his grip, I flicked my wrist and sent the bat skipping across the open roof before swinging the yo-yo towards him. He smirked wickedly as he caught the string with his bare hand, letting the yo-yo spin around his forearm before pulling harshly. I braced myself against the pull, holding onto the string tightly and seeing Rider use the yank as propulsion to climb fully onto the open roof.

The white tee shirt underneath the black coat was shredded and tattered underneath near the hem, a black pattern scorched onto the middle and resting near his abdomen. Loose metal chains held the coat together in the front with a few large loops of metal resting against his chest that hung from a black choker around his neck. His dark gray pants were tucked into lighter gray calf-high boots, the coat partially covering them as it swayed to a stop from his movement.

"Rider, then," I gathered myself and collected my weapon as he let go of the sturdy string, "You could have fun without relying on Hawk Moth for strength."

"Sweetcheeks," Rider stepped close to me, closing the distance in a blink of an eye before lightly rubbing the back of his finger against my jawline,

dangerously close to the Miraculous piercing in my ear, "You should know that having power is more fun than being a regular human."

"Ladybug!" Cat Noir yelled out as I yanked my head away from Rider's finger, using the backwards momentum to gain distance from the villain. In my place leapt Cat Noir, his claws scratching down Rider's chest.

"So, I just gotta grab your thingies and I'm good to keep going?" Rider's eyes widened as the smirk stretched out his lips, his red pupils shrinking in anticipation. Jumping back to lean against the railing, he brought up an index finger and rubbed it underneath his nose, closing his left eye and laughing a little bit, "I can't believe the old man had a hard time with you two..."

A glowing outline of a butterfly appeared, hovering over Rider's face before his eyes narrowed and the smirk shifted into a snarl.

"I said 'I got it', asshole!" Rider waved a hand over his face, shattering the butterfly motif before focusing on Cat Noir, "Picky, picky..."

"Seems like your boss wants this finished quickly," Cat Noir flexed his talons and rushed towards Rider, his claws digging into the clothing as he pushed the man back over the railing, using the momentum to send both of them tumbling off the roof. Cat Noir shot a glare back at me, and I rushed to grab the black baseball bat. Grabbing it along its length, I snapped it in half on my left knee while ignoring the pain in my right ankle.

The two ends of the bat bounced onto the roof tiles, hollow and wooden...but no black Akuma butterfly fluttering out from it. I hobbled towards the roof and whipped down the yo-yo, snagging it around Cat Noir's waist and tucking itself around its own string. Wrapping my end of the string underneath my arm and twisting, I yanked hard to pull Cat Noir away from Rider.

Cat Noir let go when he felt Ladybug's yo-yo tuck itself around his waist, glaring into Rider's red eyes as the two were separated.

"No luck up here!" Ladybug yelled out as the yo-yo swung him towards the building. He slipped out from the yo-yo's grip and focused on Rider, watching him hit the ground flat on his back, a small debris cloud broiling over his form.

"Ahah-ow!" Rider coughed out, a red glow forming within the debris cloud. Cat Noir barely ducked out of the way as several red bolts struck where his head used to be, his ears pinned back in surprise. The cloud finally settled to reveal Rider holding out his right hand towards Cat Noir, his left arm wiping away the dust and dirt on his face using his coat sleeve, "I thought superheroes were supposed to save people from falling, not send them toppling over the sides."

"That only applies to regular civilians, Rider," Cat Noir called out, one of his hands reaching for the expandable bo staff nestled on his back.

"Ouch, my civilian identity," Rider mocked, pressing his left hand against his chest before spreading the fingers on his right hand wide, sending out more bolts of red flame.

Cat Noir dropped from his perch, using the staff to catch himself on a light pole before falling to the ground and landing on his feet. Rider's hand followed him down, arcing more bolts towards the superhero before Cat Noir raced towards Rider. A red ball sped down towards Rider's head, colliding with the brim of his hat and pushing it down to block his view. Rider took a step back and tried to adjust before Cat Noir slammed into him, tackling him down to the ground.

"His rings!" Ladybug called out from somewhere above him, his green eyes catching the five rings on Rider's fingers and pulling them off before Rider regained his senses. Tossing the five metal rings in the air, Ladybug caught them and slammed them onto a tipped fence, using the spearpoint to shatter the rings with the sudden force and wide expansion. The metal broke into tiny pieces before falling uselessly to the ground.

A black-and-purple butterfly struggled out from one of the pieces, fluttering up into the air.

"No more evil-doing for you, little Akuma..." Ladybug quickly ran her finger across the length of her yo-yo, the top opening like a ladybug opening its shell before dropping it near the ground and spinning in a tight circle behind her. With a quick flick of her wrist, she sent the spinning yo-yo out and hit the fleeing black butterfly, the shell of the yo-yo snapping shut over it as the yo-yo retracted to her hand.

Cat Noir looked over to Rider while Ladybug did her cleansing ritual, seeing the villain persona fade into purple scatterings of dust that fell away from the man's body, leaving behind a groaning mess of a man.

"Ohh...geez, what the hell?" He raised a hand to his dark hair, opening his dark eyes to look at Cat Noir standing over him, "Whoa, wrong side of Paris, I think."

"Do you not remember what happened?" Cat Noir offered a hand to the man, hoping to help him up. The man took it and dusted off his clothing after he regained his footing. The red sports jacket caught Cat Noir's eyes, seeing the bright green pine bush embroidered over both breasts.

"Kinda? I came here with my brothers to see a family member that moved here a few years ago. Name's Osomatsu, by the way," The man smirked, "Mind if I ask for directions back to the airport? That's where I was last...I think."

Cat Noir laughed a little, "I think a cab would be a better fit for you."

A high chirp sound from my earrings, alerting me that I was about to revert back to my normal self. I quickly glanced around to make sure that no one was in the immediate area. Cat Noir had escorted Osomatsu back to the street and wouldn't be back for a little while. My right ankle throbbed with pain as I tried to walk normally to a more secluded area.

"Tikki...spots off," I leaned against the side of a building, not fully making it into a 'secret' area before the red creature reappeared in front of me.

"(Y/n), you didn't need to push yourself so har--"

"(Y/n)...?" Cat Noir's voice called out from behind me, snapping my attention towards him as I found myself speechless. He was staring right at me, his gaze sometimes moving towards Tikki but always settling back to me.

"Listen, I can explain...!" I turned around fully while propping myself up on the building, my face flushing with embarrassment. Cat Noir calmly strode over and slammed a hand next to my head, making me flinch and close my eyes.

Karamatsu stood in front of me when I opened them again.

"You...?! But--" I scrambled for words, silenced by his soft laugh as he stood up fully once more.

"Surprise, I guess. I kinda figured it out earlier in the fight," He shrugged, holding my shocked gaze as he spoke, "You weren't moving around like you normally do, so I thought something had happened...like twisting your ankle, perhaps?"

"I thought that I hid it pretty well..." I groaned as I lowered my eyes to the ground.

"You did," Karamatsu pulled his hand off the wall and rested it under my chin, tilting my head back up to face him, "I was looking for it."

"So...then double surprise?"

"Three surprises in one day: finding you were my neighbor and both of our little trade secrets."

"Promise you won't use it against me?" I gave him an apologetic look.

"You're my best friend," Karamatsu gave a wide smile, "Why would I use who you are against you?"

Poseidon!Karamatsu x Reader

Inspired by ara_jhoo's prompt.(Scenic inspiration from 'Green and Blue', composed by Neil Davidge.)

"Hold on!" I screamed at the top of my lungs, coughing and spitting out the salt water in my mouth as a wave crashed over the starboard side of the ship, reaching out towards a teenager near my age as he clung to the side railing only a meter out of my reach. The ship shifted underneath us, giving her last groans before I heard a rush of air within her belly, crying out in fear as my hand switched from reaching out for my brother to clinging onto the same side railing he was positioned on.

"(Y/n)," His voice was oddly calm in the circumstances, the rough seas coming closer as people shouted and screamed in terror around us, "(Y/n), you're going to be okay."

"Akio!" His name left my lips, shifting into a pitched scream as I watched his grip relax, staring in horror as he fell into the swelling sea several meters below us, "Akio--!"

The large cruise ship bucked underneath me again before I noticed another wave crashing over her starboard side, pitching the ship violently and pulling me from the railing into the ocean's chilly embrace. The life jacket yanked me back up to the surface of the water before something slammed on top of my head, dragging me underneath the cold depths once more.

I screamed into the water as I felt someone grab at my hair and jacket, tugging at the life-saving device like they needed it more than I did. Gripping onto the life jacket tightly, I tried to wrench myself away from the desperate person, not getting very far before I felt them kick at my head while their hands pulled on the jacket, the device meant to save my life now easily yanked off of my body as the person kept shoving me under.

The stormy waves were numbing my body and it took everything I had to swim up to the surface, quickly losing the battle as another wave crashed down over my head.

Akio...Mom...

My last thoughts went to those that were on the cruise ship with me, the gray clouds growing darker as I slipped under the surface.

I woke up screaming, clinging to the bedsheets with the same strength as when I had fought for the life jacket and breathing heavily through flared nostrils. Silence filled my head before I could hear the gentle waves lapping at the shoreline just across the road, my hands slowly easing in their tension before I finally gathered the energy to stand up from the bed.

The sky was still covered in its nighttime shroud with the visible stars completely outshone by the full moon reflected on the water's surface.

I had to shake my head to clear away the nightmare, the terrifying memories of the deadly cruise ship accident that happened years ago. I was the only survivor, yet I couldn't explain why I was found alone and unconscious in an empty life raft by another cruise liner that had altered course for a rescue effort. The statement still didn't make any sense to this day, as I had known

all

of the life rafts had been deployed with max capacity and two-thirds of them had been overturned in the rough waters as people tried to climb onto them from the water.

Everything about the accident pointed to my survival being impossible.

Everything, except what Akio had told me.

'

(Y/n), you're going to be okay

.'

I opened the window before leaning heavily against the windowsill, taking in the ocean air as it gently caressed my face and hair. Despite the traumatic event that I lived through, I couldn't stay away from the ocean.

Taking in another breath before closing the window, I put on a light sweatshirt and slipped my feet into a pair of flip flops, leaving the small house and walking out to the shoreline on the beachside property. The place that I now lived in as an adult was quiet, with only a few houses lined along the private beachfront property that was a decent drive from civilization. The house used to belong to my grandparents before they passed, leaving me in charge of their estate in their will.

I walked onto the sand, kicking off the loose sandals and leaving them by the pathway, feeling the sand between my toes as I moved towards the shore.

Someone would think that a survivor of a maritime accident would completely avoid the body of water that it happened in, and that was partially true in my case.

I never fully submerged into the water, only working up the courage to go out into calm waters up to my knees. It took me years to make it that far, but I was okay with never swimming in the ocean again. I was absolutely fine with shallow pools since there was a bottom to them, preventing me from sinking down hundreds or thousands of meters.

The ocean tonight was like a large glass table top, spreading out as far as the eye can see underneath the moonlight with the only movement coming from the quiet waves that gently rolled onto the shore in small laps. I folded my arms across my chest and gripped the sleeves of the sweatshirt tightly, slowly moving towards a flattened rock that was just large enough for me to sit on. The rock was only completely out of the water during nights like this, and I had no idea why. But who was I to deny sitting on a comfortable spot that seemed like it belonged to only me, since I was the only person to come to the beach at night around here.

"It's so beautiful..." I whispered to myself, closing my eyes as a gentle breeze swept against me.

"Which part?" Another voice joined mine with a soft laugh, "The sky, the moon, or the ocean?"

Quickly glancing over to my right in shock, I saw another person standing a ways off from where I was sitting, their silhouette facing the ocean as their features were illuminated by the moon's light.

It was definitely a man, his short bangs moving with the wind, the majority of his hair pulled back into a lengthy ponytail that trailed down to near his knees. He wore a blue hooded sweatshirt with the sleeves partially rolled up his arms, both of his hands tucked into the pockets of his jeans that completely covered his legs and left his feet exposed to the elements. Similar to me, he was also barefoot on the sand.

"All of it," I curled up on the rock, bringing my knees up to my chest as I looked back out to the glassy ocean, "It's really the only time that I can enjoy its natural beauty, since--"

The words died on my lips, unsure if I wanted to tell this stranger about the memory that resided in my head.

"Well, I'd say that Poseidon is kind to you," The strange man commented, "Some say that he rarely lets the sea stay this tame for this long, but if you've seen it for multiple nights like this, you're lucky."

"Not terribly lucky," I scoffed a little, wrapping my arms around my knees as I buried my face into them, "I'm still afraid of getting into the water."

"Why?" I heard the sand crunch as he walked a little closer, "Did something happen to you?"

"Let's just say that I shouldn't be alive right now."

"If it happened in the ocean, then maybe he's trying to apologize," The stranger sounded like he was standing right next to me.

"Poseidon?" I lifted my head up to see the man looking straight down at me, his blue hues bright as they caught some of the moonlight, "From what I know of the mythos, he's just as unpredictable as the seas he controls...and just as vengeful as them at times."

"Well," He sat down on the sand next to the rock, nearly at my eye level as he looked out at the smooth water surface, "Is that the same water that should've killed you?"

I followed his gaze out to the watery horizon, my eyes partially hooding as the memory of the violent storm raged in my head.

"Yes, but it wasn't just the ocean that tried to kill me," I fully closed my eyes, "The storm that hit the ship was a lot bigger than we were told, and it quickly whipped the waves into a frenzy."

The screams echoed in my head as the first sign of danger made itself known to the passengers, many of us falling from our bunks as a distant thud reverberated through the hull. Akio and my mom were quick to help me off of the floor before we ran through the hall, rushing with the other passengers to the muster station for an update on what was going on. We were some of the last people there as the captain told the passengers that the storm had worsened, that the mayday had been called, and the crew were to escort all of us to the lifeboats before the power on the ship went out, the darkness consuming the entire ship with only the lightning outside as a source of visibility.

'This way!' Akio shouted to my mom and I, taking our hands and grabbing three life vests from somewhere before the swarm of people followed our lead. The throng of people streamed onto the upper decks where some crew members were already getting ready to load the lifeboats.

There would've been enough room for everyone.

People panicked and I somehow was pushed to the forward deck, completely exposed to the raging sea and torrential rain. The ship bucked to her left and people screamed in terror as I heard something deep within the ship explode, the deck underneath my feet rising up before dropping in

the trough of a wave. I was left in the air for a few milliseconds before following the deck, hitting it hard and skidding against the side railing.

'(Y/n)!' My name was called out in worry, something sliding towards me before I realized that the deckchairs had followed me, scrambling to get out of their way before the bow of the ship rose with an oncoming cresting wave. The motion flipped me over before the bow slammed down into another deep trough, the deck rising up to meet me very quickly and not giving me any time to brace myself.

"If the Greek gods were real, then I could only call what happened a war between Zeus and Poseidon," Opening my eyes against my wishes, I felt the tears start to stream down my cheeks and into the sleeves.

The waves grew more vicious as I clung to the side railing, hearing the passengers' screams and cries mingling with the sounds of the rain and waves. I felt a hand upon my back before Akio grabbed my life jacket, stabilizing himself before holding onto the same railing I was.

'(Y/n), we need to get back to the boats!' He called out over the storm, his gray eyes calm despite the commotion around us, 'Let's use the railing--'

A rogue wave cut him off, drawing a scream from me as the cruise ship was violently wrenched to her side, the cold salt water washing over us and pushing the deckchairs into the sea. Akio and I clung to the railing as the ship was now dangerously listing on her port side, most of the sea now crashing against the open deck that we were on.

'Another wave like that and we'll go under,' Akio yanked on my pajama sleeve, grabbing my attention, 'Just climb backwards and we'll make it.'

'You don't know that!'

'Yes, I do!' The look in his eyes stirred me into moving, the panic flooding my system slightly pushed to the side, 'Just like that. Keep going, (y/n), and we'll get to a lifeboat.'

My hands shifted to cover my ears, the tears flooding down my cheeks as I curled up into a tighter ball, wishing the memory to stop or to go away.

The railing extended all the way down the length of the deck, allowing us to crawl our way towards the lifeboats. Fighting against panic with the drive to see my mom again, I kept my tight grip on the poles meant to keep us from falling over the side of the ship, using them like rungs on a ladder with the extreme angle the ship was now at.

'We're almost there,' Akio had a smile on his face, probably meant to keep me calm, 'Just a little bit further.'

I passed underneath one of the launching rigs for a lifeboat, the empty ropes swaying with the pitch of the ship. Two empty rigs turned into five...nine...

All fourteen of the lifeboats had been launched on this side.

'Keep going, (y/n). You're almost there,' Akio kept encouraging, the smile never wavering as the stormy waters grew closer with each passing minute.

'No, we're not!' I screamed at him, stopping my movement and crying hard, 'We're going to die!'

'Keep moving!' Akio shouted in my ear, startling me into moving a meter back on the railing. The kind look had completely dropped from his face, now only showing a stern gaze that demanded I obey his commands, 'Yes, the lifeboats are gone. I saw that before you did, but we still need to keep moving back. This ship is sinking by her bow, so her stern is where we need to get to.'

I took in his words, catching my breath before understanding his intentions. He wanted to get to the highest place before the ship sank, giving us the best chance of survival.

With barely a nod, I focused my attention on keeping my grip despite the rising waves, climbing backwards all the way to the back of the ship. Some

other people had made it there by climbing on various pipes and obstacles before the ship rolled further onto her starboard side.

'What now?' I looked in front of me to see Akio just out of my reach, the calm smile back on his lips as he muttered something, 'Akio?'

"I had loved being in the water before it happened..." I sputtered through the tears, feeling my chest tighten up. The next rogue wave made itself visible right before it collided with the ship and I screamed out for Akio to hold on as I tried to rescue him. The cruise ship slipped under the waves shortly after he fell into the water, and I started the real fight for my life as someone deemed themselves more important than me for their survival, "Now, I don't want to even be around it when it's a clear and sunny day."

"But you're around it when it's calm like this."

I had completely forgotten about the man sitting next to me on the sand, quickly wiping the tears away with my sleeves as my face flushed with embarrassment.

"Like I said, I don't think Poseidon would want me near his waters again, especially if I wasn't supposed to survive."

The man hummed quietly to himself, leaning back on his hands as his blue eyes focused on the calm water.

I waited for a few moments for him to say something before standing up, rubbing my sleeves over my face to fully dry the tears as I stepped off of the rock.

"Do you think that's what Akio would want?"

His words stopped me in my tracks, spinning on my heels to see an empty beachfront. No one in sight. I rushed towards where he was sitting to see the indentation partially filled with water that quickly drained into the sand.

It was a month before I saw the strange man again.

Another restless sleep forced me to stay awake throughout the night, the memory of the sinking turning more into a nightmare as time continued to pass. What had startled me awake this time was the face of the man that pulled the life jacket off of me, twisting from its usual human appearance into that of a demon, snarling and gnashing its teeth at me as it shoved me underneath the water.

"Can't sleep?"

I barely glanced over at the speaker, seeing the long-haired man walking along the shore towards me. He was wearing the same clothes as last time.

"No..." I buried my face into my arms, hugging my legs close as I adjusted my position on the flat rock near the water. It had been a while since the ocean was this calm, and I just wanted to listen to the gentle roll of waves on the shore.

"Is there anything that I can listen to?" The man stood still within arms reach of me, tucking his hands into his pant pockets, "Or whatever?"

"I have a question for you," My mind snapped from the horrid memory, remembering how he had disappeared last time.

"What is it?" I could see him raise an eyebrow in expectation, his brilliant blue gaze fixed on me.

"Why did you bring up Poseidon last time? Normally someone would mention God...but you didn't," I lifted my head from my arms, looking directly at him. His expression didn't falter or seem taken off-guard by the question.

"Poseidon is the most well known god of the sea, so it just slipped from my tongue."

"I guess..."

"I have a question for you," The man gave a smile.

"And that is?"

"Would you like to go for a swim?"

I blinked once before staring at the man with caution.

"Why would anyone ask that in the middle of the night?" I narrowed my eyes in suspicion, edging close to the opposite side of the rock, "Let alone ask someone they don't know."

"Ah, my apologies," He laughed gently, "I didn't think it was that odd of a question. Let me rephrase it, then. I'd like to help you get over your fear of the water and, seeing that it's another calm night, there's no better time."

"There could be sharks or other predators in there," I shook my head, "No thanks."

"What if it was during the day?"

"Then maybe."

The man's smile widened a little, "Does the unknown scare you more in the dark? There probably aren't any animals that could hurt you in the area."

"I don't have the strength to go in further than my knees," I stood up, taking a few steps away from the man as he reached out his hand towards me, "I can't...especially with a stranger..."

"Then let's get to know each other," He instantly tucked his hand against his chest, giving a bow, "My name is Karamatsu. I'm a brother to two others that are around the same age as me, but they live elsewhere."

"I'm (y/n) and I'm alone," I winced at my poor wording, "I mean that I don't have anyone else in my family, since my parents divorced when I was young and am currently estranged from my father's side of the family."

Karamatsu's expression fell as he stood back up, "I'm sorry to hear that...Ms. (Y/n), would you give going into the water a small chance if it was this calm during the day?"

"As long as I can see the bottom, I may be okay..."

"Wonderful!" His voice grew loud in the quiet air, startling me, "Then I'll keep checking the weather until there's a calm day."

"Good luck with that," I lightly scoffed, a small smile resting on my lips at his sudden energy, "With that large hurricane passing south of us, we won't have calm seas for a few weeks."

"Then may Poseidon smile upon our chance meeting tonight and provide the right moment for you to swim again."

I stared in amazement at the perfectly straight line on the horizon, the ocean remaining just as flat as it had a few nights ago. With the sun high in the sky, there were barely any waves upon the water with the exception of some smaller ones lapping at the shoreline. The few homeowners living near me were camped out on the sand, their young kids playing in the calm waters and using the smooth surface to find fish or shells that were normally hidden by the motion of the waves.

"(Y/n), good afternoon," The semi-familiar voice of Karamatsu drew my attention to the man sitting near the shaded area, his back propped against the closest tree to the water. He had abandoned the sweatshirt and pants that he wore at night, instead donning a black tank top that showed off the muscular arms propped up across his knees. A pair of sunglasses acted like a headband, keeping his bangs out of his face while his feet were sandaled, his waist and upper legs covered with a pair of blue shorts.

"Every time I see you, the water is calm," I laughed a little, uneasy at the odd coincidence, "Are you some kind of magical being that I should be afraid of?"

"Far from it," Karamatsu stood up, patting down the backside of his shorts before moving towards me, "Even if I was some kind of 'magical being', I think I'd keep it a bit more hidden."

He held out his right hand to me while his head slightly tilted towards the calm waters.

"Ah...right..." I looked away for a brief moment, "I just need to go change..."

Karamatsu's smile widened a little, his dark eyes lighting up with excitement.

Dark...? I thought he had blue eyes...

I told him that I'd be back shortly, adjusting the small grocery bag in my arms before unlocking my front door. Setting the food away, I cautiously opened the top drawer of my dresser, pulling out the one-piece bathing suit that I hadn't worn in years.

It used to be my favorite article of clothing before the sinking, but now it just was another bolt of fabric that sat useless in the dresser. The black background wrapped around the entire piece, thin webs of blue and my favorite color interlacing over the chest and waist to create an imitation of a bikini.

I groaned as I stripped down to my skin, stepping into the suit that still fit me. Grabbing a long overshirt to cover myself and a beach towel, I slathered sunscreen all over myself before leaving my house. The walkway was very warm to my bare feet as I quickly crossed into the sand, a nervous frown settled on my lips when I saw Karamatsu still standing where I had left him.

"You said that you can only go up to your knees?"

"Yeah," I folded the towel neatly next to the tree that he had been using.

"How far would you like to go today?"

I stilled, not expecting the question. I had thought that Karamatsu would try to get me to move at his pace since he seemed completely comfortable with the water, ready to put up quite a fight against whatever he suggested...except for the question that left his mouth.

He was letting me set the pace of my own progress.

"Uhh..." I glanced towards the glassy-smooth ocean, "Let's go up to my knees and I'll decide from there..."

His smile softened as he held out a hand, "That's a wonderful plan."

Karamatsu was gentle in helping me into the ocean, the water barely offering any resistance as I carefully walked until the surface barely touched my knees. The screams from the memory echoed in my head and my legs stiffened, forcing Karamatsu to stop next to me as my body refused to move further. His thumb cautiously hovered over the back of my hand as he waited for me to make the first move.

"I...I don't think I can go any further," The tremble in my voice was obvious, my eyes fixated on the sand underneath my feet.

"Then we'll stay here," Karamatsu didn't let go of my hand or sound frustrated with me, "When you're ready to move, just take the step and I'll be right here."

I heard the neighbor's children playing nearby, the splashing of the water and high-pitching joyful screaming reminding me of the terrified shouting partially drowned out by the titanic waves that hit the cruise ship. My eyes widened as I tried to mentally push past the memory, shouting at it to go away in my mind as my hand clamped tighter and tighter subconsciously around Karamatsu's.

"...I see," Karamatsu's voice was low, his grip soft on my hand as he lifted me completely out of the water, cradling my close to his chest, "We'll move away from them, then."

My perception of reality shifted from the deck of the cruise liner to a small cove that I recognized as the end of the bay area the houses were built next to. My feet were on dry sand once more as I realized I was staring at the ocean, the calm surface remaining still as Karamatsu stood in front of me with his back towards me.

"I..." My mind registered that I had blanked out, shame covering my face as I pressed my hands over my eyes, "I'm so sorry...!"

"Why do you need to be sorry for something that you didn't do wrong?" Karamatsu looked back towards me, shifting his right leg to face me completely, "I was the one who thought it would've been a good idea at your beach, but recognized that it wasn't the best place with the children screaming like that."

"Please, let me try again...!" I lowered my hands from my face, clasping them together tightly as I begged for a second chance. Karamatsu looked surprised, his eyebrows arching high on his brow.

"You don't need to ask me that," His expression softened, "If you want to give it another attempt, then claim it."

I looked back to the calm waters, taking a timid step towards it before retreating. Clenching my fists tightly, I screwed my eyes shut and ran at the waterline, feeling the cool water splash around my feet before the water level reached my hips. I wasn't expecting the water resistance to slow down my legs and cried out as I fell forwards into the water, the thundering noise of my splash vibrating against my ears.

I panicked.

Flailing my arms, I breached the surface quickly and backpedaled to get to shallower waters, falling once more as the sand shifted underneath me and slipping back under the surface. A pair of strong hands instantly lifted me out of the water, two arms wrapping around my back as I was pressed into a warm chest. My hands and arms were folded between the person's chest and myself, my fingers clinging to their shirt fabric like it was a safety blanket while I trembled in their arms.

"You didn't need to go all in if you didn't want to," Karamatsu's voice rumbled within the chest, "You can take it slow. I'll be here to support you every step of the way."

"I want to get over this ridiculous fear...but I'm so scared!" Tears of frustration rolled down my cheek, mixing with the salt water that clung to my skin, "I don't want to be scared of the thing that I used to love..."

"You went through something that most people don't ever want to experience. It's completely understandable that there's a scar torn open by being around or in the water, but if you're going to force yourself against that wall over and over...maybe it's best that we stop for today and wait for another calm day to happen," Karamatsu didn't let me go as he began to walk back towards the shore, the water's surface gently lapping against my hip.

"No," I pressed my hands against his chest, pushing myself away from him as his arms shifted to accommodate the movement. I glared up into his dark eyes, a bit of surprise held in them as Karamatsu looked back down at me, "If I don't do this now, then who knows when the sea will be this calm again. I'll lose my chance to heal from the trauma and may never go back into the water again. Please...let me go."

Karamatsu's eyes softened as his arms relaxed, letting me stand on my own in the water, "If that's what you wish."

The water settled around my waist, resting just above my natural hipline as I took in a breath. Karamatsu stayed where he was as I took slow steps away from him, moving out towards open water.

With Karamatsu's constant supervision and help, I was able to make it up to my neck.

I became a little braver while Karamatsu wasn't around, venturing out when the ocean was a little more active but never going out in the water when the waves were high. I had even dunked myself underwater a few times before scrambling back to the shore, fighting down the fear of drowning as I felt sand underneath my hands and feet.

I even expanded my swimsuit attire, buying a few more one-pieces along with a two-piece that was the closest I could get to a bikini that didn't show a lot of skin.

The ocean had its normal activity on the shoreline as I lounged on the warm sand, my back propped up against the tree that Karamatsu had used months ago. My confidence wasn't built up enough to venture out into the ocean when the waves were rolling over at around my chest height, the white caps further out proving that the swells and currents were large enough to potentially drag someone out into the ocean's depths.

"Well, it's definitely not calm today, huh."

I turned towards the familiar voice, seeing Karamatsu holding a hand above his eyes to act as a shade from the sun beating down on the beach. He wore the same black tank top, but had changed out the long blue shorts for red ones and had cut his long hair into a much shorter hairstyle.

"Karamatsu," I sat up and smiled at him, "I guess that my little theory of water being calm when you're around isn't true after all, seeing as you're here and the water is acting like its usual self."

"Well, I can't control the water," He gave a wide smirk, lowering his hands to his hips, "Wanna try going out today?"

"Oh, I'm not sure...those whitecaps look really mean," I looked out to the deeper water and pointed at a few swells that peaked before dropping back into the ocean, "It may not be a good idea."

"No worries," Karamatsu held out a hand towards me, his eyes partially closing as the smirk shifted into a gentle smile, "I'll be right by your side, like always."

I took his hand while casting a nervous glance at the water, hesitating when the waves washed over my feet.

"Just jump over the waves when you think they'll drag you under," Karamatsu offered, "They'll push you up and over them."

"I know...but..." I let myself get pulled out towards the crashing waves, Katamatsu leading the way by offering his body as a shield against the waves that were too small to jump over, breaking the motion and letting me

pass into the deeper water. I paused when the water reached my hip, a wave breaking at head height before Karamatsu let go of my hand.

The wave hit me in the face, the force knocking me back a few steps. Before I could recover, another wave dragged me under the water. Panic quickly flooded my system and I tried to surface, reaching out to where I had thought Karamatsu was standing.

I felt the cloth of his shorts and clung to it, finding my footing and standing up to suck in a deep breath before another wave crashed over me.

"Karamatsu...help...!" I choked out as the sky darkened quickly, opening my eyes briefly to see the form of Karamatsu a few feet away from me, "Please...!"

"You're nothing special," He huffed, a disappointed look settling on his face before it was overtaken by boredom. The dark hues shifted into a red tint, a sneer creasing his lips, "You're just a scared little human...so what does he see in you?"

"Karamatsu!" I cried as a larger wave swelled in front of me, easily double my height and I held my breath just before it crashed down on me with the force of a car being thrown at me. The currents had picked up and a riptide had formed from the constant motion of the waves and undercurrents, my footing growing weaker as the sand shifted underneath me.

I couldn't find Karamatsu anymore, but now I wasn't sure if I wanted to find him at all. He had changed so much from the last time we met that I was almost convinced he was a different person.

A wail of a storm siren blasted from above the surface of the water, my head breaching it for a moment to realize the sky had grown completely dark with the clouds swirling in a circular pattern overhead.

"Ah, now I know who you are."

I twisted around before ducking underneath an incoming wave, quickly rising to the surface to see the man that looked like Karamatsu sitting cross-

legged near the surface of the broiling water. He leaned forward, his right hand propping up his chin as his red eyes focused on me.

"You're that wench that Poseidon saved ten years ago," His voice deepened a little, the red color becoming more pronounced as it seemed to glow from within, "So, how does it feel to survive one of my storms?"

I stared at him wide-eyed, coughing and sputtering as another wave tried to suck me under, "You're...!"

The man's lips twisted into a nasty smirk, lowering towards me as I struggled to stay on the surface of the surging ocean. Grabbing a fistful of my bathing suit, he easily lifted me out of the water as I gripped his wrist tightly with both of my hands.

"Say my name, human."

"...Zeus," Rain began to pelt my face as the storm surged around us, lightning cracking in the sky as thunder quickly chased after it. I dared to look underneath me, my face paling as I realized that I was

miles

from the nearest shore, somehow dragged out to sea by the currents. I looked back up at the deity dangling me over the raging sea, the waves pushed and pulled into massive sizes by the air underneath us, "What do you want with me?"

"Just satisfying a curiosity..." Zeus' eyes shifted over my face before dropping his gaze to look at the rest of my body, "Seeing why my brother has been so distracted lately, why he's stopped so many of my storms from hitting the area where you live. Getting a good look at you, I still can't see why he'd bother with such an ugly human."

My heart fell in my chest, some of his words nestling deep within my mind as my other insecurities rose.

"What was your name again?" Zeus raised his other hand to his chin, a brief look of thoughtfulness covering his face before he shrugged, "Oh, well. It doesn't matter. Poseidon won't find you out here since he's busy with other matters near North America, but if you promise to be with me, I'll bring you back home."

"No, I won't," I shook my head, knowing that Zeus was just as vengeful as Poseidon when it came to humans, and he only saw them as things to play with and use for his satisfactions. I wasn't going to lower myself to that just to save my life.

"Shame."

With one word, Zeus smiled as he let go of my bathing suit, my wet hands not getting enough grip to hold onto him before free-falling down into the cold ocean.

It was freezing, the colder waters from the deep dragged up to the surface by the storm's activity and quickly numbing my skin. I cried out in shock as I tried to remember the direction to the closest land, eventually just picking a direction and swimming in it as the waves crashed around me.

A large wave swelled in front of me before slamming down, sucking in a small breath before I went under. The noise underwater was cacophonous, the thunder partially adding to it as the storm grew overhead. I fought my way back to the surface, coughing and crying in terror as another wave pushed me deeper into the water.

Completely disoriented, it was all I could do to just swim to the surface, fighting to keep the panic from taking over my nerves and making me freeze up in shock. Spitting out the mouthful of salt water, I shouted for help as the trough of the wave deepened before a large wave rolled me back under, the currents tossing me about like a ragdoll.

If Karamatsu was indeed Poseidon, then whether he helped me or not was up to a figurative coin toss of fate. Almost one-hundred ships are sunk in a year, so what were the odds that Poseidon, the Greek deity of all the seas in

the world, would stop whatever he was doing and save one tiny, pitiful human that was supposed to have died ten years ago on a cruiseliner?

One in...a lot.

My mind numbed as I came to the conclusion that maybe becoming Zeus' courtesan would've been a better fate than dying in the unforgiving sea, my movements stilling as the cold seeped into my body. The surface was a pulsing mess of light and dark, waves rolling across it and creating a wonderful view for me...if I wasn't sinking down into the abyss.

I gave up trying to swim back to the surface, knowing that I didn't have the strength anymore to keep myself afloat. The last bit of air in my lungs rose from my lips, the bubbles dancing their way up to the chaotic surface. My colored hues began to dim, my vision growing blurry as my eyes closed.

Sorry, Akio...I guess you're wrong for once.

"(Y/n), stay with me!" A faint voice called out, sounding somewhat familiar. I barely opened my eyes to see a dark silhouette rising up towards me from the darker depths, recognizing the face of my brother as he swam to me. His gray eyes looked directly into my own colored hues as he reached me, grabbing my hands and pulling my numbed body close, "You're going to be all right, sister."

Hooking my arms around his neck, Akio swam quickly towards the surface as the water rushed against my ears. His momentum sent us flying above the water for a moment, the air sucked into my lungs as I coughed harshly before seeing the rising waters greet us. Another kick of his legs kept us on the surface, my brother's strength keeping us from going back under despite the waves crashing around us.

"Akio...?" I muttered my dead brother's name softly, wondering if I was hallucinating. His hair was the same color as I remembered, the black color mixed well with a blue tint that caught the light from the storm overhead. Akio's gray eyes closed as he pressed his forehead against mine, warmth radiating into my body as he held me close.

"Just breathe. I've got you."

"You're one of his little pets, aren't you?" Zeus' voice was close, the bored tone giving way to interest, "A recent one, too, by the looks of things."

"What he is to me is none of your concern."

A new voice entered the conversation, Akio flinching a little under me as the water calmed down nearly instantly, the storm still raging violently above us. Zeus scoffed as he looked towards the ocean underneath him.

"You're getting in my way again, brother."

"I'm not letting you hurt those that I care about," The new voice sounded like it was coming from behind Zeus, the person blocked from view as the deity turned around to face the newcomer, "Akio, go."

Without another word, my brother took off in the water with me clinging to his back. I tried to look behind us, to see who it was that was defying a Greek god, but couldn't see through the frequent lightning strikes.

I closed my eyes and held onto my brother's neck, the water rushing past us.

"...you can open your eyes, (y/n)," The voice of my brother sounded far away, "You're home..."

I moaned as I clenched my fists, feeling sand run through my fingers. Propping myself up, I opened my eyes to see the familiar beachhead in front of my house, devoid of any neighbors or people lounging on the beach with the sky still dark overhead.

"Akio...?" I turned to face where he was speaking from, freezing when I saw a dolphin beached on the shoreline, far from the water's edge. It was between myself and the shore, but its head was focused on me.

"Go on..." The dolphin's mouth simply opened a little, its eye meeting mine, "I'll let him know that you're home safe."

"Akio!" I scrambled over to the new form of my brother, torn between giving him a hug and shoving him back into the water, "Why...why are you like this?"

The dolphin glanced to the side, raising its tail before slapping it on the wet sand and moving back towards the water. I got the hint and quickly hooked my hands underneath his side, wedging him back to the water as he 'walked' himself. The calm waters washed over his skin as Akio turned back to face me.

"I gave myself up to keep you safe," His beak opened briefly before closing again, "As to why I'm a dolphin now, that's a question for Poseidon."

"I...I thought you died when the ship sank," Tears welled within my eyes before streaming down my face.

"He did."

I swiveled my head towards my right side, hearing a familiar voice come closer before I locked eyes with Karamatsu. His long hair was tied behind his head, the blue shorts sitting at his waist.

"You're...Poseidon?" I stared in disbelief at the man that had helped me start to get over my fear of the water, "I thought you said you weren't a magical being."

"I don't think a deity is on the same level as a faerie or mage," Karamatsu laughed a little, his hands sliding into his shorts pockets as he stood next to me, his blue eyes switching from looking at me to the dolphin form of my brother, "You did well, Akio. You're free to leave."

Akio didn't say anything else before silently slipping underneath the water, ignoring my pleas for him to wait. I whirled on Karamatsu, the deity I now knew as Poseidon.

"Why did you do this?!"

"Your brother offered me his life in order to save yours," Poseidon answered calmly, sitting on the sand next to me as I stared at him, "I'll admit, I was curious to see why he'd give such a wholehearted offer with no demands for himself. In exchange, I gave him another chance at life by reshaping him into one of my servants."

The quiet sounds of the waves hitting the shores were the only noises in the area for a while. Poseidon raised his eyes up to mine after taking a breath.

"You're upset at who I am, angry that I took your brother from you, and sad that I kept this all a secret from you."

"Who wouldn't be feeling those things after finding out that your only family is now a different species," I lightly scoffed as I took a few steps from the sea god, "Why me? Why did you stick around to try and get to know me?"

"Because it's rare that humans nowadays offer themselves in sacrifice for another," His answer was simple, "I found someone who was courageous enough to come back to the water after she nearly died in it."

"Why was I the only survivor of the wreck?" I faced Poseidon with tears in my eyes once more, "Why couldn't you save everyone?"

"It's as you said earlier...we were fighting and your ship just happened to sail into our battlefield," I remembered commenting that the storm was similar to a war between Zeus and Poseidon, "Righting an overturned boat is an easy thing for me to do, and I placed you inside before sending it towards an oncoming ship."

"Then...everyone else died because you were saving me?"

"You were the only one that was still clinging to life when Akio's prayer reached my ears," Poseidon lowered his gaze from me to the sand by his feet, "If I had to guess why you were still alive, I'd say you have some of my kin's blood in you."

"Okay...then why come back after all these years to try and get me into the water again?" I motioned towards the water, the waves starting to swell to their regular size, "Akio's offer to you was to just save me from the sinking ship, and I definitely wasn't courageous to come back into the water until you...until you showed me that I could do it."

Poseidon's blue eyes met mine from under his dark bangs, "Because I was tired of watching you from the water. It frustrated me that you'd only come to my ocean when it was calm, and hurt me even more that you didn't enjoy it like you had previously," His eyes went back to the stormy horizon, "For some reason, it pained me when you gave up on trying to go deeper, to go further than your previous attempts. So I wanted to help you myself."

He stood up effortlessly, his hands falling out of his pockets and lightly resting on my shoulders as I faced him.

"You made your demands and I met them when I was able to."

"The calm water...the questions about swimming at night versus during the day," I lowered my gaze from his face, "But why help me?"

"It's very rare that a god falls into true love with a human."

My eyes snapped back up to his, seeing the gentle smile on his face while his blue eyes regarded me with care.

"It's even rarer that they fall in love with no intention of using the human in their schemes," Poseidon released my shoulders before taking a step back, exhaling a breath like a large weight lifted off of his shoulders, "But you don't need to worry about anything, (y/n). I'll leave you alone from now on, and I'll be sure to send calm seas your way every so often so you can swim without fear."

My heart thudded in my chest at the thought of never seeing Karamatsu again -- of never seeing Poseidon again -- and I reached out to grab his hand.

"No...don't go..." My voice was soft in the quiet, "I don't want to be alone again..."

"If I stay, then you'll be in danger," Poseidon offered a saddened smile, pressing his free hand against my left cheek.

"Then visit me just like you have been for the past half-year. It doesn't need to be every day, but whenever you find some time..." I leaned into his hand, closing my eyes as the tears started to dry, "I know that time is probably different for you than for me, so..."

"Are you certain?"

"God or not, you're the only person I know anymore," I nodded a little bit, feeling his thumb caress my cheek, "I won't see Akio often nor do I want to force him away from his new life...but I don't want to be alone anymore. You've treated me with respect when we talked, and I know I'll miss that more than anything."

"And you're all right with a god loving you, (y/n)?" Poseidon lowered his head towards mine, "Despite the dangers that could come with it?"

"I'll learn to be careful," I uttered before Poseidon locked his lips with mine, a blush flowering in my cheeks as he deepened the kiss, my hues staring into his deep sea-blue eyes before closing.

》》======¤ Fourteen Years Later ¤=======《《

"Oh my God, Mom! You're so fucking embarrassing!" A preteen screamed at me from her bedroom, slamming the door harshly and making the house shake with the noise as she continued raving against me within the enclosed room, "Just leave me the fuck alone!"

I stood stunned in the hallway, two tickets lightly held in my hand as music blared to life within my daughter's room, effectively shutting out any attempt I could make to try and calm her down from her angry outburst. Lowering my eyes to the tickets, I slowly made my way to the kitchen and placed the tickets on the refrigerator with a magnet.

"Oh, Poseidon..." Muttering my husband's name softly brought tears to my eyes, "This is so much harder than I thought it would be..."

I hadn't seen Poseidon in several years, knowing that he didn't have the same perception of time as I did, but still yearned for his help in raising his always troublesome daughter. Getting some help was easier than I thought it would be from other people, with plenty of services that I was able to take part of and get support from...but this was definitely harder as a single mother to a demigod.

The water near the house was never calm again, always churning and angry when my daughter had a fit. She absolutely loved it when the ocean was wild, but my fear kept my feet firmly on the shore. Imagining Poseidon's disappointment with me was heartbreaking, my hand pressing down over my chest as I closed my eyes briefly.

Quickly wiping away the tears before my daughter could see, I glanced over at the tickets, knowing that it was a long shot for me to even buy them.

They were passenger tickets to a cruiseliner ship, offering passage for a few day voyage out to sea.

I was mad for buying them, but being on a cruise ship was something that my daughter wanted for her birthday a few years ago. Seeing her reaction to a small vacation with just the two of us wasn't what I was expecting at all and made me wonder if I had said the wrong thing...

We sat at the dining room table in silence, only letting the noise of the utensils hitting the plate echo our thoughts while we ate the food that I had prepared. The chicken breast marinated in lemon juice was something I always made as an apology, knowing that it was her favorite food and allowing it to say 'sorry' for me when she wouldn't listen to me directly.

I caught her glancing at me every so often, her sea blue eyes just as vibrant as Poseidon's hues, the black makeup surrounding it making the natural color much more pronounced. If I said anything at this point, she'd shut down and I'd lose the chance to have her properly hear me out...so I stayed quiet while my daughter contemplated on what to say.

"Hey...Mom...?" She stopped eating, pushing around the green beans with her fork while waiting for my response.

"Yes, Akemi?" I paused in raising the fork full of chicken, casting a gentle look towards my daughter.

"I...I'm sorry about getting mad at you," Akemi glanced to the side, her left hand lifting up and playing with the longer strands of her unkempt hair, the color dyed black from its usual light brown. She stated that she felt more comfortable with the darker colors, but I'd never understand why since she inherited most of her beautiful looks from Poseidon. Sometimes I wondered how she'd react if she found out that the legendary sea god was her father.

"No, I get it," Setting my fork down, I gave Akemi my full attention, "It was rather sudden of me to announce that cruise, and I didn't really consult you about the scheduling to see if it interfered with anything you were doing. I wanted it to be a surprise."

"I just..." She looked like she was searching for words to say, "Does it have to be a cruise?"

"I thought that's what you wanted," I cautiously raised an eyebrow, uncertain of where she was trying to take the conversation.

"IT's just...I don't like the water anymore."

The statement stunned me. Akemi, the daughter of Poseidon and the one who would swim in stormy waters if she was allowed to, didn't like the water?

"Why?"

"Don't get mad," She leveled a warning look at me, as if she was expecting me to become furious with whatever she said next, "I sometimes go to the beach at night...you know, just to swim when there's no one there, but lately I've felt...weird."

I braced myself for her telling me about some weird powers that she was developing, unsure of how I was going to tell her about her 'missing' father.

"I think I've seen a guy watching me from the water," Akemi phrased it as a question, as if she was unsure of what she saw, "I know it sounds dumb, but I think I see this...face in the water whenever I look down at it. Blue eyes just staring back at me."

My heart jumped. It was a small comfort thinking that it was Poseidon watching her, but I wasn't sure if he was anticipating seeing his daughter or seeing me.

"So, I've stayed away from the water ever since."

"When did you last see this face?"

"About two months ago?"

Two months ago was Akemi's thirteenth birthday.

"It's been a while since then," I looked over towards her and met her cautious gaze, "If the water frightens you that much, then I can sell the cruise tickets. I wouldn't want my gift to make you uncomfortable at all."

"No!" Akemi nearly bolted up from her seat, recovering quickly and adopting a nonchalant look on her face, "No, that's fine. I think I'll be all right as long as I don't stare at the water."

"The cruise is still a few months away," I caught onto her passion, smiling inwardly that her love of the sea was still in her heart, "Just let me know if you don't want to go, okay?"

I balked as the cruise ship blared its horn as it pulled away from the loading dock, my hand gripping the door handle tightly as I held open the door to mine and Akemi's cabin well within the belly of the cruiseliner. Akemi didn't notice my freeze up, nor seemed to catch onto my hesitation about

boarding the ship, happily picking out her bunk and throwing her suitcase onto it.

I had spent some time on the beach early this morning, sitting against the tree as the waves crashed onto the shoreline. Hoping against hope that Poseidon would show up, I offered to him a prayer of protection over our cruise, fervently wanting history to not repeat itself.

I lost my mom and brother to a cruise ship; I would not lose my daughter to one, too.

"You just gonna keep standing there?" Akemi's voice shook me from my thoughts, a smile quickly spreading across my face to hide the fear.

"Sorry, I was just in awe of the cabin. It's much more extravagant than the one I was in years ago," I dragged my suitcase over to the free bed, opening it and putting away some clothes.

"You were on a cruise before? Why didn't you tell me?" My daughter stopped unpacking, staring at me dumbfoundedly.

"It wasn't a pleasant experience, Akemi."

"Oh..." She slowly started unpacking again, using the dresser that was provided, "Like...bad service or something?"

"Something like that," I sat on the bed, running a hand through my hair.

"Gotcha," Akemi sounded disinterested, "Well, if you have a bad time with this go-around, just make sure to leave a bad review."

"Not sure if that'll help, but I'll try if it happens again."

The first day of the cruise was unnerving, nearly forgetting I was on a ship until I was taken up onto the deck by Akemi. The endless ocean stretched out to the horizon and beyond, the water everywhere I looked. She had been talking that she had met some kids her age and wanted my permission to hang out with them. I gave it graciously as I stayed frozen on the deckchair she had sat me down at.

My knuckles turned white with strain as I clenched my hands together, looking up towards the clear sky and seeing flashes of the brutal storm in my head.

"It's okay, (y/n)...you're going to be fine," I whispered to myself, reluctantly letting my hands relax as I opened my eyes to see the sun shining down on the deck, younger children running and screaming in joy as they chased each other in a game only they knew the rules to. I

needed

to let go of what happened, refusing to let my fear dampen the excitement that Akemi was feeling about this trip.

After all, the odds of me being involved with two maritime accidents were highly impossible.

"Hey, Mom!" I tore my focus from the watery horizon to my daughter approaching me with someone walking behind her, a happy smile on her face as Akemi stopped a few feet from me, "Osomatsu says that there's a nice little arcade room we have access to. Can I go with him to play?"

My mind froze at the name, quickly looking at the teenage boy behind Akemi to see a smiling boy around her age. His dark hair was cut short, the bottom of his bangs barely brushing his eyes as he met my gaze with dark hues. The red jacket he was wearing wasn't closed up, letting the wind play and tug at the limp fabric while his hands were tucked into the pockets of the jacket. His blue jeans were a little darker than normal, and a pair of red shoes covered his feet.

The boy's name rang a bell in my head, bringing back the memory of what Poseidon called himself when he first introduced himself to me. The name coincidence was just that...right?

"As long as you don't get into trouble," I cautiously gave my blessing and watched the two leave towards the stairs leading underneath the deck, a seed of worry growing in my belly about the boy. He had looked similar to Zeus when I first saw him.

"Oh, Poseidon...watch over your daughter," I mumbled quietly as I pressed my hands together, looking up to watch the white clouds slowly drift overhead and wishing they didn't darken.

"Akemi, over here!" Osomatsu waved towards her, grabbing her attention from one of the parlors as she brushed some of her longer hair out of her face. Akemi smiled in response as she followed his lead down the well-lit hallway, seeing the sign that he had pointed to, "Your mom is really weird."

"Yeah, she can be, but it doesn't hurt anyone so I don't care," Akemi scoffed, wishing that her mom was a little more aware of the clues she had dropped. She definitely didn't want to be around this Osomatsu kid, especially when he practically got physical with her when they first met. He had been especially handsy, wanting to touch her hair and clothes. A well-deserved punch sent him flying back a few feet, but it didn't seem to bother him and brought him closer to her because he was 'into women that fought back'.

"You mean she's like that all the time?" He raised an eyebrow while looking back towards her, "What else does she do?"

"None of

your

business," Akemi snarled, glaring at him as he opened a door labeled 'ARCADE', pushing past him and into the game room.

"Okay, geez..."

Akemi glanced around the room to find an arcade cabinet that seemed to suit her tastes, pressing a button to start it and using the built-in joystick to control the character while pressing the buttons signifying a fighting style to combat the bad guys on the screen. Osomatsu settled in next to her, watching as she played before looking over at her.

"What."

"Nothing," He laughed a little, "With how feisty you are, it almost reminds me of some Greek gods."

"This is the third time you've mentioned that," Akemi spared him a glance, meeting his dark hues with her own brilliant blue orbs before focusing back on the game, "Got a hard-on for mythos or something?"

"Something like that," He pressed a button for a second player to join, matching her patterns as his character joined hers in fighting the bad guys, "I've seen a few of them walking among us."

"Yeah, right," She scoffed, flicking her joystick hard to the side and causing the character to slide dash across the screen.

"No, I'm serious," Osomatsu countered, chasing after her character with his, "Zeus is a good friend of mine."

"Will you stop trying to impress me?" Akemi stepped away from the cabinet, glaring at Osomatsu as he watched her move, "None of the myths are real, gods don't exist except for in people's heads, and I don't like you."

"Did you get this attitude from your mom?" He didn't seem phased by what she growled at him, his hands letting go of the game's control stick while leaning against the cabinet, "You may have gotten it from your dad, who knows. He can be pretty volatile, too."

"You

don't

know my dad!"

"Oh, Akemi," Osomatsu suddenly closed in on her, his hands grabbing her upper arms tightly, "I know a lot about who your dad is, I can show you what you are and,

trust me

, that is the least interesting secret that your 'mom' is keeping from you."

I wrung my hands nervously as the passengers were alerted that dinner would be served momentarily, wandering the halls to look for this arcade room that Akemi said that she and Osomatsu would be at. Walking past several parlors, I eventually found a sign with an arrow that marked where this arcade room was, quickly following its direction and opening the door to see Akemi standing by herself in front of a gaming cabinet.

"Akemi, there you are," I took a few steps into the room, hearing the door close behind me, "Come on, let's go get our seats for dinner."

"I don't want to eat with you," Her tone was harsh, making me recoil a little before she spun towards me, her hair spreading out with the sudden motion as Akemi's blue eyes locked onto my shocked expression. The bright blue had dulled, growing dark like a stormy sea.

"That's fine, I can find a way to have them bring food to you here if you wanted to keep playing," I took a step back as Akemi advanced towards me, her hand clenching tightly as a bright inner light began to flash in her eyes, "Akemi...?"

"When were you going to tell me?!"

"Tell you what?"

"That you forced yourself onto a god! That a twisted

thing

like me was born from it!" Tears began streaming down her cheeks as I heard something snap deep underneath us, "I didn't want to be born to a disgusting parent..."

"What are you talking about, Akemi?" My head tried to wrap around what she was saying, "Nothing like that happened."

"Oh, yes it did! Osomatsu said that Zeus saw it happen," Akemi pointed towards someone behind me, drawing my attention to the door and Osomatsu leaning against it with his arms crossed over his chest. The smug look on his face brought up the long-buried memory of the furious Greek god holding me high above a raging sea, his red eyes regarding me like an ant about to be crushed under his foot.

The same red eyes that were focused right on me from underneath Osomatsu's bangs.

"Zeus...! You--" Words failed me as the ship began to list to one side, causing some drinkware to fall and shatter on the ground before the gaming cabinets groaned against their bolted feet. I flailed my arms to regain my balance, my mind blanking as I stared at Zeus in his human disguise, "What have you done?!"

"Oh, I did nothing, little (y/n)," Zeus' voice echoed through the mouth of Osomatsu, a satisfied smirk resting on his face as the ship heaved under our feet, "You should've told Akemi the truth about who she really is before she even got on the ship. Now that you've made her mad, it looks like you've doomed everyone on board. After all, demigods are more chaotic than we are."

"I didn't do this!" Akemi cried out in fear behind me, yelping as she ducked underneath something. Zeus stood up calmly from his leaning position, shoving me to the ground as I tried to stop him from getting to my daughter.

"Of course you did," He grabbed a fistful of her shirt, dragging her off of the ground easily despite the punches and kicks he was getting, "You're straight from Poseidon's sack, so

you're

the one causing this ship to flood. From what it sounded like, the filtration system popped when you got angry at mommy-dearest, and now the ship is sinking rather quickly. My hurricane will ensure that you don't get off the ship alive and Poseidon won't hear of this until you're both in Hades' tight grip."

"Let my daughter go!" I cried out as I grabbed at Zeus' arm holding her high in the air, pushing and pulling at the limb.

"Only if you become mine," He laughed a little, "Offer is still open considering you spawned this thing. Break your bond with Poseidon and produce strong demigods for me, and I'll ensure that this ship doesn't sink."

"It was

you

...!" Akemi grabbed a fistful of Zeus' hair, yanking hard to draw his attention, "

You're

the one that tried to force yourself on Mom, not her to Poseidon!"

"It's not like that knowledge will save you now," He scoffed, pulling his hair out of her grip before dropping her to the floor. I scrambled over to Akemi, gathering her in my arms as something smashed itself against my back, "I'd say that you've got...less than an hour?"

I glanced at Zeus to find him gone, the arcade door swinging wide open as gravity tugged on it.

"Come on, Akemi..." My daughter didn't say anything as I pulled her towards the door and rushed down the hallway. There weren't any passengers running in panic through the halls, most of the noise coming from the deck as people screamed for help. I pushed past the rising fear of losing those I loved, grabbing a life jacket that someone had discarded because it was too small and shoved it over Akemi's head, the motion snapping her back to the present.

"No, Mom! You need to wear this!" She fought my hands as I secured the waist cinch around her, "Mom!"

"Akemi, stop," I tried to keep my voice steady, "Yes, you are a child of Poseidon, and yes, I should've told you much earlier...but I was scared. With

his blood running through your veins, you will be safe in the water. I don't have any abilities, but follow what your instincts tell you."

"But you'll die if you don't get one!" The tears were pouring over her cheeks, the stormy look in her eyes gone as she clung to my hands like a lifeline.

I simply smiled and kissed her forehead, "Poseidon will protect me."

"But, Zeus said--"

"Your father has saved me before and I know that he'll save me again if he's aware of the situation," I led Akemi up to the deck, fighting down the fearful memories as they began to overlap with what I saw. Trying to keep my feet steady on the flooded deck, I pulled my daughter out in front of me and guided her towards where I felt the high point of the ship was.

"Mom!" She cried out in fear as a wave washed over the deck, pulling a few deck chairs with it back into the water.

"Poseidon, please...save your daughter," I muttered in prayer, moving to ensure that Akemi was holding onto the railing after the ship gave a guttural moaning sound. I didn't care if I died from this; I just wanted Akemi to be safe.

"

Mom!

" The frightened scream reached my ears before the wave touched us, crashing into the railing. My grip wasn't strong enough to hold on, slipping from the railing and sliding against the deck until the wave carried me over the edge and into the churning ocean.

My world became dark quickly as the towering waves collided with each other, the spray raining down on me before I was pulled underneath the cresting aftershock. The sky was broiling with thunder and some lightning, the cruise ship quietly slipping from view as my heart broke into pieces.

I didn't know if Akemi got off the ship before it went under, and I didn't know if Poseidon had even heard me.

I stopped trying to stay on the surface, the emotional pain in my chest too much as I went limp and sank underneath the waves.

"

Mom!

" Akemi tried to hold onto (y/n), watching helplessly as her mother disappeared over the side of the ship as the wave mockingly left her alone, clinging to the railing with no one around. She pushed her wet hair out of her face, her heart pounding like crazy in her chest as she tried to envision the water inside of the ship leaving it, stretching out her hand towards the door her mom had pushed her through.

The thunder rolled above her through the clouds, as if mocking Akemi's effort.

"Fuck off! No one cares about you, dick!" She shouted to the sky, knowing that Zeus was still somewhere watching his handiwork unfold.

"You did for a little while there," His response took her off-guard, a golden bracer reaching down and grabbing the life vest that was attached to her. Akemi struggled against the strong grip, glaring up at the red eyes of the Greek god of the sky as his lips stretched wide in a smirk, "Since your mom doesn't have much longer anyway, I'll extend her offer to you. Lay with me, give me strong sons, and I'll undo the damage you've done."

She stared at him in anger, the gold armor Osomatsu was now wearing fully displayed in the lightning storm surrounding them. A gold wreath of olive leaves wrapped around his head while his lower half was covered in a long white toga. A long red cloak dropped down from the chest piece armor's back, the ends of both cloak and toga fluttering in the wind as rain began to pelt down on both of them, the water not even touching Zeus.

"You can go fuck someone else!" Akemi lunged forward and bit down on Zeus' exposed hand, the skin hard to sink her teeth into.

"Oh, aren't you adorable," Zeus laughed, placing his free hand against his cheek as his eyes partially closed in amusement, "Only a full-blooded god can hurt another goAAAAHHH!"

The taunt turned into a scream of pain as a gold-tipped trident pierced through the exposed upper arm, Zeus instantly dropping Akemi from his grip as he recoiled from the clean hit. She cried out in shock as she started to fall back down to the roiling ocean, feeling her back hit something solid that wasn't water and instantly looking behind her.

A pair of bright blue eyes met her own, gazing at her for a moment before shifting to look beyond her. Akemi felt herself become adjusted in the person's grip, a strong arm holding her close as the other arm reached out and grabbed the falling gold-tipped trident, spinning it around with a flurry and pointing it back at the recovering Greek god standing in the sky.

The person looked similar to Zeus, his hair style nearly the same at the front but growing much longer towards the back, held fast by a gold circlet. A three-pronged crown sat high on his head, the jewels on each prong matching the color of the man's eyes. The trident was fashioned with the same colored jewel as the ones in the crown.

"Poseidon!" Zeus laughed, descending a little to get a bit closer, "What a surprise to see you here."

Poseidon...? Dad...?

Akemi glanced up at the man glaring towards Zeus, feeling his arm tense up around her back as if to reassure her that she was safe.

"I'm getting tired of your bored antics, brother," Poseidon growled out, "If you have nothing to do, then go play with your own children and leave mine alone."

"Oh, please. You're holding my newborn niece! I just wanted to say 'hello' while we enjoyed the cruise together," Some clouds pulled away from the storm, forming into a tight oval underneath him before Zeus sat down, crossing his left leg over his right, "Just some family bonding time, that's all."

Akemi shifted her glance down to the waters beneath her, stunned to see that there were people floating in the water where there used to be a ship. A cry of shock left her lips, her hands fumbling with the life jacket.

"Please let me go! I need to save them!" She cried out to Poseidon, seeing his angry gaze shift towards her as it softened. Thrusting a finger down to the churning waters, she could only hope that her point got across, "I have to save Mom!"

Poseidon's eyes widened, shooting a furious glare up towards Zeus before he completely relaxed his arm, letting Akemi drop down into the water as the life jacket was carried off by the wind.

Akemi didn't have much experience with her abilities, but she tried the best she could while the storm worsened around her, the waves growing higher as the wind whipped around the lifeboats. Her time spent swimming in the rough waters at the beach had partially readied her for this, but she felt her stamina start to run out as she managed to flip over another lifeboat, helping push people into it before moving onto the next overturned rescue craft.

With each woman she helped into the boats, her heart sank a little more when she didn't recognize their face.

A loud crack of thunder partially deafened her as lightning streaked across the sky, the storm seeming to retreat as the wind began to calm down, the survivors raising cheers. The lifeboat Akemi was near had tried to bring her into it, the survivors pleading with her to leave the rest as the water was beginning to cool from the storm.

She quickly pulled away and swam towards the last overturned lifeboat, seeing several people clinging to it. Feeling a surge of water next to her, Akemi glanced over and saw a pair of blue eyes looking up at her from the

water, her fear rising as the look matched the same one she had seen on her birthday.

"...Dad...?" She slowed her swimming as the eyes closed, the surge of water rushing ahead and overturning the boat with a freak wave. Several of the people were lifted with its motion, landing inside safely despite their screaming of terror. The surge of water circled around as the lifeboat lurched under its own power away from the site of the sunk cruise ship.

"I can't find Mom! Dad, please!" Akemi cried out as the watery surge started towards her again, disappearing underneath the surface after she yelled out the words. Finding a piece of flotsam, she climbed onto it and held her hands to her face, crying hard as her last accusation to her mom rang in her head.

Poseidon dove down deep after hearing his daughter shout to him, swimming through the cold waters effortlessly as he looked for anything that would give him a sign that (y/n) was still alive. When his daughter had alerted him that she was somewhere in the water, he had wanted to search for (y/n) himself, ultimately leaving it up to Akemi as he headed off Zeus. He had called out to any sea creature for aid, but there hadn't been any response from them.

"(Y/n), where are you?" His heart began to hurt at the thought of finding her lifeless corpse floating somewhere in

his

waters, a place that he said that she'd always be safe. Poseidon knew that (y/n) couldn't respond to him, but kept calling her name and hoping that he'd hear some sort of response.

"...(y/n)..."

My name...I think...

My mind felt sluggish as the surface pulled further away from me, my limbs numb from the cold as darkness began to swallow the water around

me. A figure darted far above me, between the water's surface and myself, casting a shadow over my vision.

It seemed inhuman, with three claws trailing behind it as it swam rapidly from one side of my vision to the other.

I blinked slowly as my heart and lungs ached, the last little bit of air that was trapped in my throat bubbling up and out of my mouth.

Poseidon, please watch over Akemi...

Part of me wondered if this was what Akio felt before Poseidon turned him into a dolphin, the cold numb becoming more and more comfortable.

Poseidon heard it, quickly looking behind him to see a small air bubble dance its way towards the surface, tracing its path down and blazing along the same path. Urging himself to swim faster, his bright blue eyes illuminated the darkening water.

He nearly collided right into (y/n)'s limp form, grabbing her tightly and pressing his lips against hers while he exhaled. She coughed against him, the transferred air bursting from the kiss before he firmly pressed her against him, holding his free gauntleted hand against the back of her head.

The air flooded my lungs so quickly that I had to cough to try and reset them, feeling a pair of lips press harshly against my own before another gulp of air passed between the person and I. His blue eyes were intoxicating to look at, his own gaze fixated on me before I realized who it was.

Poseidon!

I mentally cheered and wrapped my arms around him, taking in his breath before he pulled away, motioning upwards with his hand. I nodded and clung to him, feeling the immense water pressure lessen as the darkness fell away from my sight to reveal the calm upper waters in a blue that rivaled Poseidon's own eyes.

We burst through the surface of the water, much more calm than it was before I slipped down into the depths. I released the air Poseidon had given me and sucked in a fresh breath, coughing out some water that remained in my legs before hearing a joyous cry.

"Mom! Dad!!" Akemi's voice drew our attention towards a frantic splashing, the large piece of flotsam being hand-paddled over by our daughter.

"Akemi," I reached out to her, partially laughing as she jumped back into the water and swam over to us, the flotsam obviously too slow for her tastes, "Oh, baby, I'm so proud of you...!"

"Mom...I'm sorry, I didn't mean to!" She cried against my shoulder, "I didn't want to get so mad that I made the accident happen...!"

"Akemi, don't blame yourself for this happening," Poseidon spoke softly, his arms holding both of us close as he lifted us out of the water and back onto the flotsam, sitting with us as the debris rocked a little.

"So, are you...really my dad?" Akemi cautiously glanced between myself and Poseidon, looking down at our hands intertwined together, "You weren't...really across the sea, were you?"

"Technically," He gave a soft laugh before raising his hand to caress Akemi's cheek, leaning forward and kissing her on the forehead, "I didn't mean to scare you away from the water on your birthday. I just got so excited that you were turning thirteen that I got ahead of myself."

"You didn't

scare

me from the water..." She frowned a little, the look disappearing as Poseidon shifted to sit next to her and let go of my hand, "I just...didn't know what it was."

"Well, aren't you a brave person," Poseidon brushed some hair away from her face, "I'm sorry for not being there throughout your life."

"It's fine...Mom did well enough."

"Yes," Poseidon looked over at me, a gentle smile on his face as our eyes met, "She did a wonderful job raising you."

"I tried," I gave a small laugh, looking at Akemi as I rested a hand on hers, "You made it quite hard, but I think you get that from your father."

"Oh, blaming me?" Poseidon raised an eyebrow playfully.

"Of course," I quipped back just as playfully, "You left me high and dry with a child all on my own. She inherited more from you than from me."

"Ugh...gross," Akemi groaned, "Go find your own flotsam to flirt on."

"Mmm, maybe when I get you home," My husband laughed, slipping off of the debris and placing his hands on the edge.

"You're gonna push us all the way there?" My daughter sounded confused, "But...it's, like, a thousand miles away from here!"

"A thousand miles is nothing for someone like me," Poseidon began to move the flotsam in the direction of our home.

"Dad...how did you know we were in trouble?"

"You're my wife and daughter," His voice became more gentle as he spoke, "I'll always know when you're in trouble, no matter where you are in my waters. You'll always be safe."

FujioRock!Karamatsu and Killer!Reader

Write Your Way Challenge:

and myself (their version is now published!)

Universal Prompt: "Hymn For The Missing" by RED

This story contains mentions of human trafficking and violence.

If you, or someone you know, is a victim of human trafficking, please know that you're not alone in your situation. Please contact

(888) 373 - 7888

or text '

HELP

' to

233733

to get in contact with someone who is ready and willing to assist you (for U.S. readers). If you're not located in America, I implore you to look up your country's human trafficking hotline.

If you want to know more about what human trafficking is and how close it actually is to your home, please look for the

Blue Campaign

from the

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

. There are a lot of useful tips on what to look out for, who to contact, and what you can do to help someone else out of a horrid situation.

"Are you really gonna wear that again?"

His attention was brought from the guitar that he was strumming quietly, glancing over his shoulder to the man leaning against his door frame. The red streak in his dark hair was unmistakable.

"Oso," He greeted the newcomer warmly, setting the guitar to the side as he shifted to look back at the man, "I wasn't expecting you to be finished warming up so quickly."

"I just sing," Oso scoffed as his eyes slightly closed, his focus locked on something behind the stummer, "Is she still sleeping?"

The man hummed gently in acknowledgement, his gaze shifting to where Oso was looking. A small form was huddled against the large prop black-and-blue wings that were leaning on a loveseat within the room, the sleeping figure breathing lightly as both of its hands were clutching to some of the feathers.

"She's been sleeping since we arrived an hour ago and she starts fussing when I try to leave," The man laughed a little before looking back to Oso, "Only my daughter can keep me from the spotlight."

"Is Genki going to watch her?" Oso asked quietly, moving into the room and squatting down next to the man still holding the guitar, "I'm going to need the guitarist to come on stage soon, Kara."

"I know, I know," Kara hummed again, "Just...give me a few more minutes with my little starshine, then I'll wake her up and give her to Genki."

Oso offered a reassuring smile before clapping a hand on Kara's shoulder, standing up in the motion after, "Hang in there, single dad. We're almost done with this tour and then you can retire for the year."

>>===¤

Seven Years Later

¤====<<

Ugh...why does it have to be one of

these

concerts...

My face twisted up in disgust as I eyed the posters that advertised the concert I was heading towards, six men with identical faces posing for the camera and each looking just as ugly as the next. I hated this kind of thing, but Dad wanted me to send them a message...so here I was.

I tugged on the long black sleeve nervously, my focus switching to the throngs of girls about my age hurriedly moving towards the house theater to grab their open spot.

It had to be one of these...J-pop bands, but a job was a job.

Clutching my small bag close under my right arm, I wormed my way through the crowd and into the open theater where the group was going to be performing, a little awestruck by the stage that was set up.

There were pyrotechnics lining the entire front parameter of the stage with some stagehands still threading some wires that were to be used for some kind of aerial performance, but my attention was mainly on the wings of the stage area, looking for an easy way in to get behind the scenes.

"Hurry up, Sasaki!" A girl giggled to herself, pushing past me as she dragged her friend along, "We're gonna lose the best seat in the house for the VIP stuff afterwards."

I rolled with the shove before lifting up a brightly colored large ticket, the thing practically covered in sparkles with three large letters spelling 'VIP'. Tucking it into the bag carefully, I let a smirk rest on my lips as I moved away from the rushing pair of girls.

Thanks, Sasaki. I'll give it back if I remember.

Finding a spot that was out of the way, I became as comfortable as I could while waiting for the concert to start and then end. A whole hour-and-a-quarter of listening to music I didn't even like.

Truly a gift for my thirteenth birthday from my hellish dad, with specific instructions to wait until after the concert was over to start my job. Maybe he thought I was into this kind of thing...but he never really understood what my taste in music was.

"Oh, sorry!" I heard someone apologize to a few people next to me before they came closer, "Ah, geez...I didn't realize that someone was already here."

"Did I take your spot?" I wore a worried expression, mentally eye rolling at the pink-haired woman. She shook her head a little, revealing the lime green streaks hidden away in the deeper layers of hair.

"No, not at all. Just wanting to watch him in peace," She offered a gentle smile, the corners of her lips turning up into a cat-like grin.

"'Him'?" Raising an eyebrow in confusion, I looked back towards the stage when the lights in the house started to dim, the prominently female audience starting to shout and scream.

"Jade!" The woman had to shout to be heard over the din, "He's the one that plays the violin and guitar!"

"Okay!" I tuned her out as a guitar screeched from the stage, spurring on the cheers of the crowd as the lights turned from a dim orange into a bright red, watching as a winged guitarist strutted onto the stage from the left side. Some girls in the crowd erupted into hysterical crying as they shouted out

his name, the screech suddenly shifting into a melody of some sort as the guitarist took front stage, standing on one of the larger speakers. A drumset began to play out a faster beat to which the guitarist easily kept up with, the notes sounding somewhat familiar as another man stepped onto the stage, his fingers flying up and down the neck of the bass to pound out a rhythm.

The drummer shouted out a name in a short rested beat and the bassist immediately took over the melody, forcing the guitarist to take the rhythm slot while showing off his skills in the instrument. Another name was called and the woman next to me cheered a little louder, a third man walking onto stage as a bow slid across the strings of his instrument, chiming in with the harmony and building it more before the previous two musicians joined in and made a complete piece. The music swelled into another song as the singer took over, the crowd somehow growing louder at his sudden flashy appearance.

I sank to the back of the crowd, easily finding my way to a spot that was away from the crazy fangirl throng while still inside the house area. I leaned against one of the support pillars and passively listened to the concert, partially enjoying some of their songs but otherwise keeping to myself until the lights slowly died down. The crowd quieted from their raucous behavior instantly, as if they collectively knew some secret that I didn't, drawing my attention instantly to the stage as the winged guitarist slid his guitar onto his back.

The pianist began playing a soft melody that was almost haunting in its tempo, the violinist had swapped his guitar for his signature instrument during the change of scenery and began playing some longer notes as the crowd became eerily still, several yellow and green lights flickering on as they were waved slowly in the air. My eyebrow rose with curiosity at the two colors, the same ones that were attached to two of the band members...but something was telling me that they held a different meaning in this moment.

The winged musician began singing softly, his voice full of longing and regret as he closed his eyes. I responded by closing my own, just listening to him sing this sad lullaby as the instruments -- previously hammering out

some harsh melody but now soft and remorseful -- allowed him to have the spotlight.

When I opened my eyes, pictures of different people were floating across the black digital backdrop of the stage: men, women, teenage girls and boys, all of them smiling as I realized that this was a requiem of sorts to those who are still missing, feeling something wet trail down my cheek as the music swelled into a final chorus. I pressed my index and middle finger into the trail, pulling them away to see the remnants of a tear before looking up to see a familiar picture staring down at me.

The little girl smiling down at the crowd had some kind of dessert smeared a little on her face, her colored eyes open wide in joy.

The same picture was on Dad's desk.

My brow furrowed in confusion as I wiped my face clean of tears, more angry that this J-pop band -- this group of nobodies -- was trying to pawn me off as a missing person! I dipped my hand into the bag still tucked under my arm, feeling the cool metal of my knife and slightly calming down. I needed to be cool-headed for Dad's plan to work, but this band was really testing my patience.

Slipping my earbuds in, I blasted my own music as the concert continued.

"VIPs, this way," One of the concert organizers called out, using the opportunity to blend into the line as I took the VIP ticket out of the bag. I thought I heard someone crying out in shock further back in the line as I kept the chuckle inaudible, "You are allowed to have the band sign two items, including the merchandise from the shop floor. Pictures will be limited to contact-free poses, and there will be no pushing or shoving."

"Yes, sir," The line called out as one, instantly dissolving into excited chittering as I stayed quiet.

"Now then, this way," The organizer led the first few people backstage, presumably where the band was cooling down from their performance. Counting how many people were being taken back, I figured that I'd be in

the third group allowed back, which meant that I'd have a tight window to get out of sight and out of mind for the organizer and every guard between myself and the target.

I patiently waited, fidgeting like a nervous fangirl would as the first group came back about five minutes later, overhearing some of their disappointment at the absence of the winged guitarist.

The man who goes by Kara.

The second group left and came back, signaling that it was my group's turn to leave. I acted surprised as people filed from behind me, instantly slipping into the line and flashing the VIP pass. After passing the security guard, I kept a wary eye on my surroundings as we were led to the back of the stage, the sounds of conversation growing louder.

I saw my chance when the security guard behind me turned away to sneeze, slipping into the thick black curtains and camouflaging perfectly with my black clothing, holding my breath as the guard passed without seemingly noticing my sudden absence. I pushed further into the partition curtains until I broke through the other side, finding myself in what looked to be the active storage for the show as some of the props were still being stored for the next show.

Taking out the pamphlet that I was handed when I entered the concert hall, I traced my steps with a finger only to find myself off of the public knowledge map. Frustration growing a little, I folded the map back up and shoved it into the bag, switching it for the knife as I walked towards a promising-looking hallway.

I kept quiet as I leaned into the hallway, trying to listen for any noise.

I was rewarded with the soft sounds of an acoustic guitar and the sounds of footsteps coming up behind me. Pressing into a small crevice, I wiggled out of sight and waited for the person to pass.

"--ow how he gets today, Oso," A voice started speaking as the steps came even closer, my ears picking up two sets of them, "Just leave him be and

he'll be better tomorrow."

"I'm not arguing with you about this, Jade, but he has fans that are here to see and support him," A second voice spoke up in response, my mind marking it as 'Oso' while labeling the first speaker as 'Jade', both of them band members. The footsteps landed next to my hiding spot and I saw both of the band members for a split second as they walked right past me, never even looking in my direction.

"It's been seven years."

"I

know

that."

"Seriously, just leave him alo--"

The conversation faded from my hearing range, and I quickly followed the two band members to their destination. Winding my way through the hall, I had to come to a hard stop and hide behind some larger posters advertising some other act that was supposed to come to the theater, seeing Oso and Jade outside of a door as the acoustic guitar played through the thin wood.

"Kara, we're doing the VIP stuff," Oso didn't knock on the door, drawing a look of contempt from Jade, "Still need some time?"

"...sorry, I'll be right out..." The answer was soft, like it hurt for the speaker to say anything at the moment.

"We're here if you need to talk, Kara," Jade offered, "We're always here to support you."

"...I appreciate it, Jade...Tell the fans that want to see me that I'll be out momentarily..."

"Don't push yourself," The vocalist turned on his heel, his gaze heavy with grief as he walked away. Jade looked between Oso and the door, pausing for

only a moment before following Oso out the way we came from.

I gripped my knife tightly, flipping open the blade into its locked position before quietly emerging from my hiding spot and silently twisting the doorknob open. The door itself was well taken care of, the hinges barely making any sound as I opened the door wide enough to slip through before carefully closing it right behind me.

'Injure or kill this man -- I don't care which. Make an example of him and show that not even superstars are immune to my wishes.'

Dad's words echoed in my head, the knife slowly feeling heavier in my hand as I crept from the door to the back of the couch, a grown man leaning over on one of the cushions as he looked at something in front of him. Taking in a deep sigh, he sat up and looked towards his left before a simple melody was plucked out from the stringed instrument sitting in his lap.

"Happy birthday to you...Happy birthday to you..." His voice was soft, but full of emotion as I could hear him fight to keep it from breaking, "Happy birthday...dear (y/n)..."

I stilled, my eyes wide. There was no way that he knew I was here, and I clearly wasn't a fan of his that he needed to be performing for.

"Happy birthda--"

He didn't get to finish as a sharp sob interrupted his breath, the guitar falling from his hands and onto the floor with a clang as he pressed them into his face, curling over while sounding like he was choking.

I licked my lips nervously, glancing at the exposed knife in my hand before continuing towards him, quietly moving up towards the man clearly in grief still over someone's death. Poor guy, but easy prey.

Swiftly climbing over the back of the couch, I wedged myself between the man and the back cushions, hooking an arm around his throat before holding the knife against his chest. The clothing he had been wearing for

the concert was swapped for a pair of black jeans and an open-faced blue plaid shirt, the knife pressing against the black tank top underneath.

"Wha--?!"

"Kara, is it?" I cut him off verbally, wanting to get this over with quickly. I was just a thirteen-year-old girl against a twenty- or thirty-something guy; odds were not in my favor in a prolonged fight, "Don't move and I'll leave you recognizable."

He didn't respond, but I could feel the muscles in his back tense like his whole body was freezing up.

"You've been a pain in my Dad's ass for long enough, so I'm here to send the others a message through your corpse,"

Shit, why was I talking instead of just doing the job?! Dad trusted me to do this right on my own, and I'm messing it up!

"But you made me angry tonight. Not only does your band sound horrible, but you think that you--"

I was suddenly lifted from his back, something holding tightly onto the back of my shirt as I was thrown up and over the man, the knife yanked from my hand before I was slammed into the coffee table in front of the couch. I stared up at him for a millisecond before my instincts kicked in, rolling out of the man's grip and rushing him before he could recover, digging my right shoulder into his gut and shoving him back against the couch.

The momentum sent the couch tipping back as I shifted my weight on his chest, grabbing a handful of his shirt and using it like an anchorpoint as I wedged my lower right leg into his throat before the couch and he landed on the ground, the sturdy bone nearly cutting off his oxygen supply instantly. He coughed hard as I felt him trying to shove my leg off, but the high position that I placed myself in made it difficult for him to try anything.

His dark hair was no longer gelled back, his dark eyes furious as he glared into my own.

"...As I was saying, Kara...you made me angry," I slightly lifted my leg so he could breathe a little bit more, "This would've been quick, but I think I'm going to draw this out."

No, don't! Dad said to keep it quick and to not give the target any wiggle room to escape! What are you doing, (y/n)?!

Kara continued to glare daggers at me until a look of distant recognition rested on his face, the glare softening into something akin to pity or sorrow. The change in attitude threw me off mentally, expecting him to fight back harder. Here I was, a girl threatening to kill him...and he was feeling sorry...for

me?

"...what?" I caught the glint of metal from the corner of my eye, my knife within arm's reach if I stretched for it. That would mean giving up the advantage I had.

"I know you're here to kill me, and I would've taken it laying down only a few years ago..." I braced myself for a counterattack, waiting as he remained motionless underneath me. Kara took in a breath before giving me a soft smile, "But I've found something else to live for. I use my grief to fuel the fires for others, giving them the hope that they need when I had none...all in hopes that my little starshine would show the others the way back home..."

'Little starshine'? That's a dumb name---

A man's voice echoed in my head,

My little starshine...!

I recoiled as the name bounced around in my head endlessly, making me yell in frustration as nothing was going to plan. Why the hell would I care

about some dumb kid who was taken from this pansy excuse for a father?!

Why could I hear that name?!

"There you are, my little starshine!" A man called out as he pulled something feathered away from my face, drawing an excited laugh from me while I reached up to him with both hands.

"Up, daddy!" came the same demand whenever I saw him.

"Of course!" He dropped the feathered thing and scooped me up into his arms, holding me close before planting a multitude of kisses on my face, "Were you trying to get my costume for me?"

"Yeah, but it's heavy," I huffed while puffing my cheeks out in frustration, a scowl lowering my brows as I looked down at the large pair of feathered things. The man laughed as he bent down and picked it up easily with one hand, slinging it behind his shoulder before giving me another kiss on the forehead.

"You'll get strong enough to help me, little starshine. I promise."

"Good morning, starshine. You slept through your favorite part," The man presumably woke me up from a nap, taking me from someone else's arms into his own as he shook the blue streaks of hair out of his face.

"I didn't mean to...I was tired..." I couldn't hold back the yawn as I leaned against his shoulder, my left hand reaching out and grasping at the feathers sprouting behind his back. I always liked his costume...my daddy would always be an angel to me, no matter what anyone else told him.

I looked back down at the man underneath me, my eyes wide with uncertainty and fear as I could

remember

him. Why could I remember him?! Why

would

I?!

Kara's face moved closer as he pushed himself up into a sitting position, my body falling off of its own accord as his arms caught me and brought me close to his chest. I wanted to shove him away, to show that I was a threat to his life. I wanted to grab the knife still close by and show Dad that I was more than capable of impressing him, that I wasn't a mistake...that I wasn't just some orphan he picked up off the street.

"I'm sorry that something I did during the show made you upset and I wish that there was something that I could do to help you through the hurt," His voice was soft.

'My little starshine.'

"For now, just let me give you comfort in the only way I know how," Kara continued, the damned name bouncing around in my head as some phantom mocked me.

He began humming softly, the rumbling in his chest drawing my attention back to him as the name continued to echo in my head. It...was the sad lullaby that he had performed earlier in the concert, the piano melody fading in as he continued to hum the parts of the song that didn't have words.

'My little starshine.'

I found myself humming along to a tune that I didn't know...perfectly.

Kara's arms tightened around me in a more secure hold.

Casino!Karamatsu x Reader

(Requested by shimmering_clouds)

He took in a deep breath and lifted his right wrist upwards, the lights of the rundown building barely catching the gold accessory before he deftly tugged his suit jacket sleeve over it again. A drag from the lit cigar hanging between his lips partially illuminated his reflection in the darkened car window as he looked over towards the ground floor apartments, the dark hues locking onto the subtle movement of one of the doorknobs twisting to let the door open and reveal the tenant inside.

The colored hair of the resident twisted into and over itself as the long tresses seemed to be professionally curled into loose curves, the ends barely brushing against the person's elbows as they faced the door while stepping outside the apartment. Their shoulders were covered in a white-furred mantle while a black dress clung to their waist and hips, teasing the man at what lay underneath the fabric before loosening and slimming down their legs as the fabric shifted from a black shade to a brilliant blue hue.

The man swiftly cut off the lit end of the cigar before stashing it with the others in its case, tucking the metal tin into his inner breast pocket before stepping out of the car, holding the door open and making a grand gesture towards the person now walking towards him.

"(Y/n), your ride awaits."

"Ah...geez, Karamatsu," The woman smiled through her obvious embarrassment, taking his hand before he gently helped her into the seat he was in, "You

really

didn't have to do this..."

"Nonsense," He laughed as he closed the door, walking around the car and waving to the onlookers that were blatantly staring at the Toyota Century. Karamatsu offered a simple smile to those that still watched past his wave before opening the rear passenger door on the other side and sitting next to (y/n), "You said that you wanted a date that captured my attention."

The young woman stuttered quietly as she clutched the furred mantle closer to her body, the body language shouting that she was uncomfortable with what was going on, "That was only because you had to leave our last few dates early because of 'business'..."

"My flower, I will always apologize for leaving you in an abrupt manner," He swiftly took her closest hand from its position, bringing it close and pressing his lips onto the back of her bare hand before looking up at her from underneath the brim of his white fedora, "And I will always make it up to you at the next one."

"I get that...but a

casino

?" A heavy blush covered her face as she pulled her hand from his, Karamatsu's body slowly relaxing into a sitting position as he left her personal space with a small smile, "I've never been the kind gambling kind of person...and I'm pretty sure I'm overdressed for the occasion."

"You're never overdressed," He removed his hat as he waved for the driver to head to the destination, a casino that he and his five other brothers owned, "Consider this an apology date from me. I know that we've only been together for a few months, but I have no excuse for ending dates early. Tonight is on me. You can play whatever games grab your interest, eat and drink to your heart's content, and I'll foot the bill for the entire evening."

"Karamatsu..." (Y/n)'s voice warned as she partially turned her head towards him, her eyes staring a little longer at the pressed blue-striped suit underneath the gray trench coat and white long scarf, "I don't want you to go broke because of me, so I won't play anything and the only food I'll order will be from the cheapest restaurant it has."

The car turned onto the major roadway as he laughed, pushing a gloved hand through his styled hair before looking towards her.

"Trust me when I say this. If you really were money hungry, you wouldn't have even known my name."

His words chilled me to my core, my hands shaking a little before I clamped them down onto my lap.

There was always

something

about Karamatsu that had scared me, and the fierce look in his eyes reinforced that thought. Yet...

"I should probably warn you before we enter the place," His deep voice rolled from his throat, pulling my taut attention over to him as he caught my fearful look with an expression of concern, "There's a high chance that my brothers will be there."

"Sextuplets, right?"

Karamatsu nodded as he glanced away, his left hand dipping somewhere underneath his suit jacket before immediately pulling out and settling on his leg, "All the same age, all with similar faces. I'm sure that they won't mess with you, but I want you to be aware that they may try to make our date awkward."

"I've got a few older siblings, so I understand," The tension slowly left my hands as I watched the cityscape grow as the way-too-luxurious car drove closer to the border between outskirts and city.

It had been hard to open up to Karamatsu about anything, and that 'something' feeling kept my mouth shut about being with him. The relationship that we had almost felt like a taboo -- something that I really shouldn't be a part of.

My eyes pulled from the large city buildings passing us by and lowered to the gaudy dress and mantle that Karamatsu had bought for me. An outfit that I would never pick out for myself...an outfit that

he

wanted to parade me around in at this rundown casino that he had only talked about once.

"--when we arrive, if you wouldn't mind?" Karamatsu finished his sentence with a smile on his face, startling me as I shot a worried look over at him. He seemed to pick up on my panic, "You don't need to be scared, my flower. If that's not something you'd like, I can arrange for something different."

"I...think I zoned out," I couldn't pull my gaze from his fierce dark hues partially hidden behind his blue-shaded glasses, the city lights illuminating the deep blue tints in his hair, "What were you talking about?"

"Oh!" He looked surprised before smiling widely as he closed his eyes, "I was just offering to take you on a tour of the casino before we begin playing some games."

How much money is he blowing on me?!

My eyes drifted back down to the too-tight dress and faux-fur wrapped around my shoulders, giving myself some time to think about an answer, "I think that a tour would be a nice idea."

"Wonderful," Karamatsu pulled out a cellphone from one of his front pockets and began typing away at the screen, the backlight reflecting in his eyes.

The car interior once more settled into the silence between us, his gloved fingers flying over the digital keyboard before turning off the phone.

"Sir, we've arrived," The driver called out before leaving the car, gracefully walking over to my door and opening it up for me.

"Ah, yes..." Karamatsu left through his door and rushed to my side, holding out a hand as I set a foot outside the door barrier. Cautiously taking it, I felt a hidden strength in his grip as I was practically pulled from the car, swallowing my surprise and standing straight up, "Well...what do you think?"

I stared up at the glamorous sign blazing in a flurry of rainbow colors, a golden pine symbol alit with neon lighting as the colors spread out behind the solitary symbol. The sign was attached to an equally glamorous building that encompassed an entire city block to itself, the pavement around it completely spotless of trash and the exterior seemingly cleaned every day.

Karamatsu walked in front of me, the clean appearance at home with his new surroundings as a smile pulled at the corners of his lips, "What, did you think I'd bring you to some dingy place in an outfit like that? A well-dressed woman deserves a well-dressed setting, and a well-dressed man to cater to her every whim."

He

did

spend too much money,

my thoughts soured the surprising moment as I followed Karamatsu into the casino, quickly growing numb to the bright lights and loud sounds echoing from the gambling floor. The blues of his suit meshed perfectly with the color splashed around the casino, his hand moving to tuck my own onto the crook of his arm.

"I'm sorry..." I pulled away, shaking my head a little, "This...is a bit much for me."

Karamatsu's happy expression softened quickly before an understanding smile turned his lips upwards, "I understand. Large things in little doses. How about we start with one of the restaurants? Get some food in our bellies before we think of what to do next?"

"But...the tour--" I verbally backtracked, realizing that I could be in big trouble for messing up his plans.

"It can wait, along with everything else."

The ease at which he took the sudden turn of news took me by surprise, his hand allowing mine to fall back to my side as he looked towards one of the stewards moving closer to us. Karamatsu muttered something to him before the steward bowed low and moved away, his hand reaching towards his collar.

"Now, my flower. Where would you like to eat?"

Oh, this was a mistake...

I paled at the menu in front of me, both Karamatsu and I seated in a quiet corner of what I

thought

to be the cheaper option of the handful of restaurants this casino had.

If this was the cheapest option, I didn't want to know what the prices were at the other places.

"See anything that entertains you, my flower?"

"That's a new nickname..." A dark voice cut into the conversation, my skin crawling at the disgusted tone it used as I quickly looked up to see someone identical to Karamatsu staring down the man across the small table, "You've got some explaining to do."

"And I will when this is over," Karamatsu's tone fell just as dark as the newcomer's, his entire demeanor shifting into an aggressive stance, "I told Osomatsu just as much on my way here."

I didn't speak a word as the two seemed to be eyeing each other for weaknesses, the newcomer's dark aura practically wafting off his slightly slouched form. Every article of clothing he wore was stained black with

only his pants and loose necktie showing a bright purple color, the black even touching the face mask that was smothering his nose and mouth. I stilled as his dark hues snapped to mine, the light reflecting the sole purple gem earring in his left earlobe as he caught me in the act of staring.

"What are you looking at."

"Uhh--I..." My voice faltered as he leaned in closer, his black gloved hands tucking into his pants pockets while his eyes narrowed, "I wasn't--"

"Ichimatsu, enough."

Both 'Ichimatsu' and I froze at Karamatsu's new tone, heavy with a threat that could be backed up with physical violence. The brother stood back up and gave one last look at Karamatsu before scoffing, turning away and walking towards the entrance of the restaurant.

I swallowed hard enough for the sound to be heard in the brief silence, my entire body trembling in fear as Karamatsu let out a soft sigh.

"Sorry, (y/n)...Ichimatsu is one of my brothers. We...don't get along very well."

"...who is Osomatsu?" I tried to think of a question to divert the conversation.

"He's the oldest of us," Karamatsu shifted in his seat, the aggressiveness fading away as he spoke, "All of us owe a lot to him for how we live."

"Is...he the one that you're borrowing money from?" I bit down on my tongue harshly, my eyes widening in panic as I stared straight down at my lap, my fingers clenching tightly onto the dress.

Why did I ask that!?

Karamatsu was silent for a moment before laughing heartily, his hand lightly patting the table before he calmed down.

"My older brother is the one that started this business," He pulled out a metal case from the pocket that he had always been reaching for, quickly taking out a cigar from the case and lighting it, "Myself and the others keep this place running."

I mentally screamed.

This was a setup. It had to be. Some kind of prank that was paid for by some sour co-workers, or even a ploy from my family to get me married into money for their sake.

"So...you're one of the owners...?"

"Essentially," He took a drag from the cigar and blew out a sweet-smelling smoke, the breath sharply leaving the left corner of his mouth and avoiding the table completely, "Does...this news make you uncomfortable?"

Don't say yes. Don't say yes. Don't say--

"Yes."

A look of understanding smoothed out his features, lowering the cigar from his lips as a smile rested on them. A glint of blue caught my eye, drawing my attention up to the blue gem earring he had on his left earlobe, matching the one of Ichimatsu. It was possible that each brother had one.

"You're a nice young woman, (y/n). I'm sorry that you had to find out this way, but I didn't want to throw more fuel on the fire to try and chase you away. However..." The hand holding the cigar fully lowered to the table, "I won't hold it against you if you want to go home. I won't bother you again after my car takes you back, and I'll make sure to stay away from you."

"You didn't want to chase me away, but you threw so many gifts at me...why?" I positioned myself in the seat ready to leave, knowing that I was well within my right to abandon the date.

"I had thought that you would enjoy them," A brief drag from the cigar interrupted Karamatsu, his eyes soft as he lifted them to gaze at me,

"I'm...not very well versed in dating, and I agree that it was

probably

overboard."

I could only nod as my arms stiffened, the dress suddenly becoming a vice around my body and locking me in place.

"Then I apologize. It was wrong of me to push all of that onto you...When I saw those things, my first thought was of you and I bought it on impulse. Purely selfish without realizing what you really liked or disliked," The last bit came out as a bite to himself, as if he had done this before and was ridiculed for it, "You're welcome to keep it all or sell it. I only wanted to make you happy."

I remained in my seat, letting his words sink in before I took a breath.

"When we met a few months ago at my job, I...didn't think much of you," I closed my eyes, my heart warning me that if I looked at him then I'd lose my resolve. My gut had been telling me that he was speaking the truth about the situation, and I wanted to respond in kind, "You looked so lost in the makeup aisle that I just wanted to help you out so you could get out of that embarrassing situation."

"Heh...Todomatsu was never clear on what kind of facial cream he wanted."

"So when you came around the third time after needing help with finding some magazines, I was...taken aback by your proposal for a date," I continued, refusing to look up at him, "I agreed because I pitied you...but then I began to fear for myself. It's like you were hiding this secret behind your back that kept gnawing at your gut, like something

no one

should ever know."

I swallowed a harsh gulp of saliva before looking up at him, tears threatening to fall from the corners of my eyes as I met his understanding

gaze, "I'm

scared

of you, Karamatsu. I've been agreeing to everything because I don't know what you'll do if I say 'no', and have played the obedient girlfriend since then because...I don't know you."

His eyes widened a little, the cigar left forgotten between his lips as they partially opened in realization. My hands shot up to my face as I smothered my cries, tears falling between my fingers and onto the dress.

It felt as if a large weight had lifted off of my shoulders, only to come crashing back down with more force as I feared that my honesty was about to get me killed.

Karamatsu was

rich

. Not only had he the money to pay for everything he's given me, he could afford the darker services that came with it. I was probably someone's target now, a sniper rifle scope aimed at my head as the crosshairs narrowed in on my brain.

A sudden shift of clothing was all I heard before feeling someone hold me close, their warmth encompassing my body as I fought to force down the sadness my honesty had exposed. A pair of hands pressed down on my back as someone's arms pulled me closer, the heavy scent of cigar smoke wafting from the person holding me.

"(Y/n)...I didn't want to make you feel threatened by anything that I did," His voice was quiet against my ear, his hold never wavering as he spoke, "I've...never been great at this, but it felt right when I asked you for a date. The feeling has only grown more as time went on."

Karamatsu slowly released me before standing back up, a sorrowful look on his face as an understanding smile rested on his lips.

"I'll call a ride home for you. You won't need to fear me ever again."

Three weeks had passed since the failed date with the rich Karamatsu, his personal chauffeur driving me home in silence. True to his word, he hadn't reached out to me for a second chance or even stopped by my job to try and sweep me off my feet.

It was like he vanished from my life...or I disappeared from his.

The fear that I had felt while in his presence still remained, somehow growing larger as my mind twisted the strange noises in the nighttime alleys as people planning to kidnap me for ransom from Karamatsu.

I kept the dress and furred mantle that he had gifted me, unwilling to part with such an expensive outfit...not when I didn't know when I'd be invited to a regal party. My mind laughed at the thought, wondering when any of my friends could afford to throw such an extravagant event.

The casino that he owned still prospered near the middle of the city, its luminosity almost visible against the city skyline from my apartment.

...and still my heart wanted to be back by Karamatsu's side.

So, I found myself at the main doors of the casino, dressed to the nines in the gifted dress that had been altered to be more comfortable. My heart beat a thousand times a minute as I walked towards the door, giving the doorman a thankful nod as he opened it for me and welcomed my presence to the Akatsuka Casino.

"Okay, (y/n)...You're here, you have

very

little money in your bank account, and

definitely

can't afford to lose my earnings," I whispered to myself as my eyes roamed, not really paying attention to the other patrons of the casino while I moved

out of the way of foot traffic, "I'll just look for some cheap machines, drop a dollar or so in, and then leave...no matter what happens."

Karamatsu let the cigar smoke billow between his lips, the cards he was dealt laying face-down on the felt-wrapped surface of the table while eyeing the other players that challenged him and Todomatsu to a 'friendly' game. He knew the other three players were well-known high stake gamblers, taking their bait with stride as he continued his facade of boredom.

"Oh, dear," The youngest sextuplet sighed coyly, curling his fists underneath his chin as he leaned against the table, "Lady Luck just

doesn't

seem to be favoring me today. I fold."

The dealer nodded, glancing towards the other three gamblers for their call or fold. One bowed out while the other two amped up the pool.

Karamatsu called their bluff, staying in the game.

"Last round, Mr. Matsuno," One of the other men commented, the table reflected in his thick sunglasses as his eyes barely peered at him from over the rims, "Are you sure you're wanting to continue this?"

"I'm not afraid of losing," Karamatsu responded with a smug sneer, "I'm looking forward to seeing you flinch."

"Pride before the fall," The gambler counted some chips out before laying them before the dealer.

"Bet. $1,500,000," The dealer called out gently, taking the chips and adding them to the pool that had been slowly accumulating this round. Karamatsu switched his cigar from the left corner to the right corner of his mouth, chewing a little on the end in partial frustration.

He met the new bet, keeping his eyes on the gambler as the second man folded.

The dealer drew the last card, lining it up perfectly with the other four before returning to a neutral position.

A nine of diamonds, completing the straight that Karamatsu had. He knew that his hand was higher than the other man's.

A twitch in the corner of the gambler's nose was all he needed. It was a sign that he picked up quickly that meant he had done something to the cards that were in front of him.

If only Karamatsu was allowed to wear his glasses, then he'd know for certain...

"I'm all in," He pushed the remaining pile of chips in front of the dealer while Karamatsu's mind reeled with possibilities.

The house had a jack of spades, a five of hearts, a ten of spades, a king of spades, and now a nine of diamonds.

'

You know his game, big brother. Why are you entertaining this travesty of a hand trick?

' Todomatsu's voice echoed in his head, not breaking the focus of the older brother as he leaned away from the table with a sigh.

'

You have the proof, then.

'

'

Yeah, caught it on camera and Ichimatsu double-checked the footage for clarity. You can see it from the craps table three stations down.

'

"You can have it," Karamatsu folded his hand, pushing the winning cards towards the dealer as the gambler gave him a satisfied smirk, "Guess it's not my night, either."

"Fair play. A good man knows when he's beaten," The man gathered his chip prize as Karamatsu stood up from the table, his eyes catching the two bouncers following the grinning Jyushimatsu as he headed towards the man. The second-oldest sauntered away with a drag of the cigar, sliding the blue-tinted glasses back onto his face before a bored sigh escaped his lips. A flash of familiar blue caught his attention while the sounds of an argument picked up behind him.

A young woman walked lackadaisically through a section of the cheaper machines, appearing more lost than anyone else in his casino, the furred mantle a little loose around her shoulders as her colored hair seemed to be hurriedly styled into a fancy-looking ponytail. The black-and-blue dress that he had gifted her now held itself against her figure more comfortably, no longer appearing like a vice wrapped tightly around her frame.

She seemed to figure out her destination and quickly made her way to the leftmost wall, where the pachinko machines were.

"Oh, flower...you don't belong there," Karamatsu spoke softly to no one, diverting his path to head towards the same area as her.

I found a pachinko machine that was open without anyone close to it, finding the theme of the machine a little cute to be in the casino. Feeding it the handful of balls that I had exchanged for money, I twisted the knob and watched at the metal orbs dropped into the machine, bouncing erratically off of each peg in their path before falling towards the bottom of the machine.

The last of the balls fell in the basket waiting to catch my winnings, drawing a sigh as what I had left was half of what I started with.

"I didn't think that you'd come back to play some machine in the corner."

A voice sent a shock through my nerves, making me jump in surprise and look over my shoulder. A man stood some feet behind me, his hands tucked into the suit pants that were barely hidden by the gray trench coat, a soft smile seen around the lit cigar hanging from his lips.

"Karama--Mr. Matsuno, I'm so sorry," I instantly stood up and gave him a bow, folding my hands in front of my waist as the emotions from before came crashing back onto my heart. This was a man who needed to be feared and respected, even more so than when I was dating him.

"Ms. (L/n), you don't need to do that. Only those who work under me are allowed to do that here."

"Please...just allow me this courtesy, sir."

Silence grew between us despite the loud machines surrounding the area.

"If you're here to have some fun, then may I recommend something else?" Karamatsu's voice drew my attention once more, verbally pulling me out of my bow as my eyes caught his smile, "Pachinko can be fun, but I think you'll enjoy something that's a bit more...your style."

"Oh, no thank you, sir," I shook my head as thoughts of more expensive machines flooded my mind, "I can't...I only want to play these."

"Then I will join you," The smile widened as he brushed back the tails of the trenchcoat, sitting down right next to the machine I was playing at, "I haven't had a spin at this in quite some time, so it'll be fun to relearn it."

He produced a few metal balls from his pocket, feeding the miniscule amount into the machine and rolling the knob. A few seconds later, he leaned back with a disappointed look on his face.

"I...thought you owned the machines, sir. Don't you know how to play?" I tried to not sound offensive as I cautiously sat back down with my loss.

"My big brother is better at these kinds of games. I'm more of a card shark than anything else," He huffed at his cigar before turning his gaze elsewhere in the room, shooting something a fierce glare before softening his gaze towards me, "Call me old-fashioned but it's more of my speed."

"Why not go play some cards?" I tried to keep my hand from shaking as I poured in a fourth of my 'winnings', biting my inner cheek as I kept the knob as steady as I could, "You don't need to play these if you're not comfortable..."

"Would it make

you

more comfortable if I left?"

I lowered my gaze from the pachinko machine, noting the gentleness of Karamatsu's voice before letting my hand drop from the knob. No further balls fell into my basket.

"...I knew this was a bad idea..." The thought made itself known outloud, my eyes widening in shock before glancing at the man next to me to see if he had noticed.

The understanding expression on his face told me he had.

Karamatsu stood up with grace as he snuffed out the cigar, "I'll...leave you be."

"No, wait--" My protest stopped his movement as I turned towards him, conflicting emotions racing through my mind as I both wanted him to stay and wanting to run away from him, "I...didn't mean that towards you..."

A look of doubt crossed his features, "It's okay, Ms. (L/n). We're no longer in a relationship, so you don't need to force yourself to--"

"I don't have luck with winning things."

My words cut him off, a small look of shock cascading over his eyes before he raised an eyebrow for further clarification.

"I've never been to a casino because I have horrible luck, and I don't like putting money into these kinds of things because there's never a good enough return for me to even try," I lowered my gaze to the small tub holding the remaining eight balls that represented the last of my money until the next paycheck hit my account, "It was stupid for me to come here when I didn't have the funds to...that's what I meant...so if anyone needs to be leaving, it should be me. I can't afford to go into debt with your business."

I stood up as frustration built within my gut towards my actions, gripping the basket tightly while I began to walk towards the exchange counter.

A hand gripped my left upper arm tightly before instantly letting go, my momentum hindered enough to face Karamatsu once more. He looked shocked at his own action, staring at his hand for a brief second before tucking it away behind his back as his dark eyes shifted towards me.

"One more night...allow me to escort for one more night."

It almost sounded like a plea, the din of the surrounding casino fading as I focused on the man in front of me.

Here was a man who co-owned this place with his five other brothers. A man that never showed signs of abuse towards me, who never touched me without asking for some form of permission first...and he was

begging

for me to let him spend money...on myself.

"...one more night."

I let out a disappointed huff as I leaned back in the chair, letting my hand fall from the machine's button while the digital screen showed a few

numbers and fruit in a three-by-three grid.

I had already spent an hour here and lost more games than I thought possible. With a casino's odds always leaning in the house's favor, I had thought that I would've had at least one small victory in the time span. Instead, my luck turned out to be completely sour.

"I'd say 'let me try a spin', but I've got a feeling that a big win will happen when I do and then you'd blame me because I own the house," Karamatsu gave a small laugh, trying to lighten my negative mood as I shifted in the seat.

"I told you that I had horrible luck."

"You've clearly proven that," His hand was a gentle touch on my left shoulder, drawing my attention to his position slightly behind me, "Shall we try a non-mechanized game?"

"Is the shark suggesting a simple game of cards?" I tested his attitude with a light jab at his earlier description, feeling the tension in my shoulders slightly lessen as the smile on his lips widened.

"I promise that I won't use any tricks on you," With a small gesture, he held out the same hand to me, offering to help me out of the seat, "With your luck, I'm sure that I won't need to resort to card-counting."

"Gee, thanks," I hesitantly took his offer, feeling the warmth of his hand as his fingers gently closed over mine, "I don't think I'll get to see how impressive your skills are when I'm playing."

"I'm thinking of a simple game that we can play. It only requires a full 54-card deck, and I happen to own a business that has a lot of unused cards in stock," Karamatsu gave a smile as he pulled out an unopened box of playing cards, turning it so that I could see the seal on the top flap whole. Guiding me over to a card table that wasn't being used, he pulled out a chair for me to sit in and waited for my approval before moving a few chairs down so that we were facing each other over the curved table.

"Simple game, casino card table...unopened card deck," I slowly took the open seat, watching his movements carefully as the fear from our previous relationship began to bubble at the surface, "Okay, so what's the catch?"

"No catch," He looked up from opening the deck box, shuffling through the cards to ensure every single one was present before removing a joker from the pile. The cards then became a whirl of activity in his hands, the gloved fingers deftly bridging and shuffling the deck without spilling a single time, "Have you played 'Old Maid' before?"

"You said you wouldn't need to use any tricks!" I quietly pressed, backing away from the table a little, "That game is all about luck and skill!"

Karamatsu quickly set the deck down, his focus now completely on me, "Ms. (L/n), I give you my word as a gentleman that I will not use any tricks to win this game. I have no cards up my sleeves nor anything hidden in my pockets, and I will not rely on any cameras to look at your hand."

"...how would you use the cameras...?" I looked above my seat, realizing that I seemed to be positioned just outside the range of a security camera that was partially hidden near a pillar supporting the ceiling.

My eyes traveled back down to Karamatsu as he removed the blue-tinted glasses that had always hung high on his nose, fully revealing his dark hues underneath the white fedora. I could see something flicker in the reflection of the glasses.

"The Peeping System helps me find cheaters at card tables," He calmly explained as he held the pair of glasses out to me, allowing me to take it and slip them on. My vision within the rims was filled with small camera screens that were directed towards active card games, a small blue number in each upper righthand corner indicating what table was being watched. I handed the pair back to him as he continued, "Despite its dirty name, it's helped us catch thousands of people that tried to illegally gain money."

The soft look in his eyes instantly hardened and the smile vanished into a dark frown as his gaze shifted just behind me, the fear from before rushing back as I stiffened like prey.

"Ooh~nice look, Karamatsu," A new voice called out from behind me, a teasing tone streaming through the sentence as I heard the new person move closer to the table, "I was just wondering what was going on since you weren't at the table earlier. It's nice to see you back with your girl."

"You were the one that was supposed to be at that table with Todomatsu," Karamatsu scoffed in response as he looked away, his fingers shuffling the deck once more as my heart tightened as the nickname given to me from the other man, "Care to explain?"

"I had a really good run with a machine," The voice of the new male grew closer before passing on my right, a display of red, black, and white catching my eye as he grabbed a chair from between us and sat down like he owned the place, "I didn't want to lose my streak."

"Of course," Karamatsu began dealing three piles of cards from the deck, continuing until there were no more to pass out, "Ms. (L/n), this is Osomatsu Matsuno. He's the owner of the establishment, and is my older brother by a few seconds."

"It still counts," Osomatsu stuck out his tongue as he grabbed the middle pile, quickly filing the cards in order and organizing them in a suitable manner.

Oh, he

did

own the place.

"It's a pleasure to meet you, sir," I let the closest pile of cards sit on the table as I focused on Osomatsu. Visually, he was identical to Karamatsu, his dark hair styled back over his head while a few strands remained stubborn about their position along the outer edges of his eyes. The pinstripe suit jacket hung loose over his shoulders, somehow still staying in place while he moved his arms into a comfortable position and revealed the rolled up sleeves of the white shirt underneath, a red checkered tie tucking into a

black vest that clung to his chest. The black gloves Karamatsu wore were also on Osomatsu's hands.

"Like what you see, Ms. (L/n)?" The owner caught my stare, my face flushing with embarrassment as I fumbled for the card pile in front of me.

"I'm sorry, sir!" My heart hammered wildly in my chest, the all-too-familiar fear swelling rapidly as Osomatsu kept looking at me, "I didn't mean to stare..."

Once more, I felt like prey underneath the microscope of a predator, nearly squirming uncomfortably in my seat as Osomatsu's presence somehow grew next to me and drove the fear I had of Karamatsu into a shadowed corner of my mind. Suddenly, Karamatsu didn't seem like such a bad man when compared to his older brother.

"A game of 'Old Maid', huh?" The eldest smirked as the cards fanned wide open in his hands, his gaze shifting to Karamatsu, "Aren't you a bit too old for this game?"

"Who am I to deny what a lady wants to play," The jab either went unnoticed by Karamatsu, or he didn't care about lowering himself from his co-owner status to play a children's card game for my sake.

"Oh, so you're the one that wanted to play this?" Osomatsu's attention focused back on me, a chill running down my spine as I averted my gaze from the red-dressed man.

"I...can't play any other game..." The truth sounded like a lie to my ears.

"Well, that's okay. I can teach you to play something else if you're willing to learn. I'm quite good with cards, too."

My fearful gaze locked on to Karamatsu's face, realization washing over his features before he shot a glare at his brother.

"You think you're as skilled as me?"

"...excuse me?" Osomatsu's voice dropped the friendly tone he had used with me, his eyes switching back as each man regarded the other with hostility, "Who taught you how to play?"

"Who taught you how to dress?"

I shrunk down into my seat, bringing the cards close to my face to try and distract myself from the feud developing between the two.

"You lose, you get back to work."

"You lose and you back away from the table."

Karamatsu yanked a card from Osomatsu's hand after they had set down the existing pairs, quickly pairing it with another of his own cards and laying them on the table. Osomatsu retaliated with the same motion.

I swallowed hard as I stared at the joker card grinning up at me between a queen of hearts and an ace of diamonds.

A few more cards were pulled and tossed down before the joker was yanked from my 'deck', my eyes glued to the owner of the gloved hand and meeting Karamatsu's kind gaze.

'

Stay there. It'll be over soon.

'

It was like he visually spoke to me at that moment, and I patiently held out my hand as the two brothers battled out their private duel while my cards were used like soldiers picked from the reserves.

After five minutes or so, my hand was empty.

Another two minutes passed before Osomatsu threw down the joker card in frustration.

"What the hell!"

"You accepted the deal. Now, walk away," Karamatsu leaned back in satisfaction, the glasses low on his nose as he adjusted his gloves.

"Yeah, yeah," The eldest pushed himself away from the table, glancing over at me before allowing a knowing smirk to tug at his lips, "I hope you didn't make a bet with him."

"Osomatsu."

"Fine," With a roll of his eyes, Osomatsu wandered into the crowd of the casino like his attention was pulled towards a specific area.

A quiet moment of tension flooded the card table between Karamatsu and I, my hands remaining devoid of any playing cards.

"I'm sorry that happened, Ms. (L/n)," His voice was gentle as he repositioned himself in his chair, "I didn't know that he would approach us."

"Well...I was able to see you play seriously," I tried to laugh, feeling a bit more comfortable around him without Osomatsu's intimidating aura smothering me, "Granted...I didn't see very much."

"When I play against my brothers...I tend to get carried away," Karamatsu laughed a little, lifting a hand up to rub the back of his neck while his eyes closed in apology, "We never learned to pull our punches, so they become fights of skill more than trying to score points against whoever we're playing."

"Do you...intend to keep your word to me?"

"Always," The finality from Karamatsu alleviated more tension from my shoulders as I finally began to relax while Karamatsu shuffled up the complete deck again, bridging and merging the cards before dealing them out. I only reached for the cards in front of me when he picked his pile up, each of us laying whatever pairs we had on the table before starting the game proper.

Once more, the joker laughed at me from between an eight of clubs and a two of hearts.

"Go ahead," Karamatsu offered his hand towards me, "You can start first."

I nodded slowly before reaching over and taking a card from his array, pairing the two of hearts and setting them down.

"So," He started before drawing the eight of clubs from my hand and setting down its pair, "I'm sure that you have many questions that you want answers to in regards to me."

"...I do," I took another card and paired it.

"Would you mind if I asked a question first?" Another match.

I only nodded as I took a card.

"Why did you come to the casino if you think you have terrible luck?" Karamatsu's hand reached out and grabbed the joker, adding it to his hand without reacting to it.

I paused, trying to find an appropriate answer before grabbing another matching card.

"I don't know," Karamatsu drew another matching card from my hand, "I missed you..."

His hand faltered for a moment before tucking the drawn card into his own, "You didn't need to come here if this place makes you uncomfortable."

"I...I came here with the thought of seeing you," I took a card, turning it over to see the joker's grin before shoving it into a cluster of cards that I hadn't fanned out, "But I guess that was a mistake on my part..."

Before Karamatsu's hand could fully reach the cluster of cards that hid the joker, I slammed my cards down onto the table, the movement making him flinch a little as a look of confusion washed over his face, "Ms. (L/n)...?"

"Let's...just end this game here. I shouldn't be in this casino, just like you said, and the excuse of seeing you shouldn't have kept me from messaging you these past three weeks," I stood up from my seat, my gaze focused on the floor as shame and regret flooded my nerves.

"What are you--"

"Osomatsu called me your 'girl' and you didn't even deny it!" My hands covered my mouth instantly, the words flying through the air before I could even think about them. Karamatsu's eyes widened a little before his face fell into a neutral expression, his gaze sweeping to the side before looking back at me.

"I never considered you 'my girl', Ms. (L/n). You're your own person, and I will never own you nor claim you like property," He slowly gathered the cards together, fishing out the joker card from my hand without picking up any other card, "I'll go find Osomatsu so he can apologize for his wording."

"No, please..." The whine in my voice made me sound pathetic, "I...I don't want to cause trouble for you with him again."

"...you really

are

that frightened of him," His voice was soft, the joker card falling onto the table forgotten. Karamatsu took in a sharp breath before standing up, "Then I'll leave the matter. If you'd like to leave, I will escort you out."

The sudden change in demeanor caught me off guard, "Karamatsu?"

His eyes became hidden by the blue glasses as he shrugged his shoulders like he was getting ready for something, "Ms. (L/n), please make your decision quickly. Would you still like to leave?"

"I--"

Several gunshots sounded near the table Karamatsu and I were at, sending screams tearing into the air before Karamatsu lunged towards me, wrapping

me up tightly in his arms and pressing my back into the solid wood underneath the tabletop. He swore under his breath as he looked to where the gunshots had come from, his gloved hands keeping a strong grip on my shoulders before letting go.

"Seems he answered for you," Karamatsu's voice was calm, removing his white fedora and tossing it aside, "Sorry, Ms. (L/n), but I'll escort you outside."

Another gunshot rang out and Karamatsu's eyes widened before two more sounded, the noise deafening as I clamped my hands over my ears. A look of worry replaced the shock before it was swiftly covered by determination, his right hand gripping my own tightly.

Turning in place, Karamatsu pulled me low under the other card tables while shouts and screams of pain sounded throughout the casino.

"What's going on?!" I tried to keep the fear out of my voice, my hand clinging to his like a lifeline.

"Disgruntled gambler," Karamatsu responded quietly, pausing under a long table and reaching for something underneath his trenchcoat, "He was caught cheating by Osomatsu after our little game and took offense at the proof we had."

"He brought a gun to a casino...?"

"Probably snuck it in underneath his pants," Brandishing his own revolver, Karamatsu tightened his grip on my hand before leading me past a slim walkway, "The next left is a wide hall that leads to the casino kitchens. There won't be any cover, so I'll protect you as best I can."

"The guy's not subdued?!" The whisper was violent.

"Considering he shot Ichimatsu and Osomatsu..." The glance back towards me was full of rage and anger, "No."

I sucked in a gasp, remembering Ichimatsu from three weeks ago, "Are they...?"

"Oh, they're alive...just keeping the guy--"

More gunshots cut Karamatsu off before silence filled the air.

"--pinned down, but his hiding hole is in plain view of the hall."

"We'll be shot at," My heartbeat sounded like roaring thunder in my ears, fear for my survival kicking into high gear as adrenaline urged me to run away at full speed.

"Not you," Karamatsu gave my hand a soft squeeze before ducking out into the passageway, yanking me behind him as he turned to create a human wall between myself and the gunner. I sprinted down the hallway as gunshots rang out behind me, hearing stray bullets hit the walls on either side of me before ducking around a corner.

Karamatsu was close behind me, panting heavily and throwing the gray coat off towards the opposite corner across the hall while pressing his back against the wall next to me.

"See?" He offered a smile through his labored breaths, "That wasn't so bad."

I stared at the bullet hole in his right leg.

He caught my stare, "Oh, that? It's nothing."

"That's

not

'nothing'!" I moved into a kneeling position next to him as he slid down the wall to sit on the ground, "Don't move..."

"I need to get you out of here, (y/n). If I don't, then you'll keep saying that you have bad luck...and I can't stand it when you bring yourself down."

My name fell from his lips with ease, my heart swelling with a mixture of sorrow and admiration, "You really need to continue being a gentleman in this situation?"

"Always," The smile he gave was genuine happiness, "I'll never treat you as anything less than a lady."

The grin faltered as he tried to stand up, grunting a little before taking a weak step forward. I instantly gripped his shoulders as I matched his movement in worry.

"Hold on, Karamatsu..." Seeing the kitchen doors not far from us, I carefully guided him to it as I draped one of his arms over my shoulders for support, "We can hide out in the kitchen until paramedics arrive."

"A flower such as yourself shouldn't do this--" Karamatsu began to protest before he sucked in a breath between his teeth, staggering forward until I dragged back into a standing position.

"A gentleman such as yourself should know that a gunshot wound is serious," I offered a gentle smile despite the eerie silence of the casino behind us, "Plus there could still be staff that can help you. I don't think my band-aid skills will work on a bleeding wound."

I pushed the swinging doors open with my free shoulder, partially dragging Karamatsu in behind me before someone dressed in white rushed over and took him from me. Voices clamored for medical help over a radio somewhere, some of them being voices from other brothers while the staff began to tend to Karamatsu to the best of their abilities.

His hand refused to let mine go, his thumb gently rubbing against my own.

"I love you, my flower."

Karamatsu and Reader

Inspired by Kitcc14's prompt.

I stared at him, wide-eyed like a deer trapped in headlights.

He stared back, his dark hues swirling with either embarrassment or shock while our faces lit up red like a Christmas ornament. My heart was beating wildly within the boney jail of my ribcage as my mind searched for any feasible way to get out of this suddenly awkward tension.

Who calls a guy 'pretty'!?

"Uh...thanks," His voice was suddenly tense, clearing his throat before turning away from me completely, "I...uh..."

My eyes lowered in confusion, clenching my fists while an all-consuming thought wormed its way into my head.

I fucked this up. Leave and save his pride, never see him again.

"Hey, something came up. I'll let you know when--" My voice collided with his, both of us standing at the same time. My date and I stared at each other again, the red on our faces growing deeper.

"Uh--" His left hand barely covered my mouth as my words became smothered, "

Mon amie

, you don't seem quite ready for a date just yet."

My heart skipped a beat while my embarrassment slowly gave way to hurt.

"Not that it's a bad thing!" He quickly corrected himself, letting his hand fall back to his side while raising the other to rub the back of his head,

"How do I say this without being an idiot?"

A moment passed between us as his face scrunched into concentrated thinking, suddenly slamming his fist down into the open palm of the other hand while a look of realization swept over his expression.

"You're so overwhelmed by your love for me that it's become the hedgehog's dilemma between us!"

The sudden chill of the autumn wind ripped through my entire body, my threadbare jacket doing nothing against the weather. I'm sure that my face reflected the dumbfoundedness that I felt.

"I'm right, aren't I?" He stepped a little closer, the dark hues focused on my own as a confident smirk rested on his lips. The flush in his face had simmered down quite a bit.

"...sure," I couldn't hide the defeat in my voice, wrapping my arms over my chest and taking a deep breath, "...I'm not ready for

this

."

"Then we'll schedule this date another time!" The sudden chipperness of his voice drove my own emotions down the drain, "Shall we en-trance each other tomorrow?"

"I've got work tomorrow," The excuse sounded dry to me, "How about I text you when I'm available next?"

"

C'est bon, mon amie

! I look forward to your message," He waved me farewell as I made my way towards the bus stop at the park corner.

A deep frown tugged at my lips as my thumb padded the phone screen, scrolling through different articles about having a heartache.

'

How to Tell You're in Love!: A Ten-Question Quiz for Her

'

'

Tight Chest and Racing Heart? See a Cardiologist

'

'

Horoscopes and Love Lives

'

'

Fear or Fact? Anxiety vs Heart Attack!

'

'

12 Scientifically Proven Signs That You're in Love

'

My eyes narrowed in displeasure, shutting off the screen and letting my head fall back onto the couch cushion, more confused than ever about how I was feeling.

I had gone through middle school and high school without developing a crush, but the moment a suave-looking guy strides up to me and helps

collect the fallen groceries from a torn plastic bag, my heart pitter-patters like a little girl squealing over her favorite idol?

I must be cursed by someone that I had somehow pissed off in school.

...no, I knew that the reasoning was only an excuse to deny how I had been feeling towards the man I knew as Karamatsu.

I had only met him twice before he asked me out: once when he helped me with my groceries, and another when I had held the door open for him at a convenience store.

There was no cliche scene of our hands touching, no eye-catching during a stare, nothing romantical that had happened between us...but he initiated the date and now I couldn't get the damn man out of my mind.

The new feeling

scared

me.

I had never been 'in love' before, never knew its signs or how to manage a relationship beyond a friendly one. What if I never measured up to him? What would he think if he knew that I had no job, lived in my grandparents' house, and was attending college on a full scholarship? How would I explain that I planned to better myself by continuing my education to gain a higher degree? Would he even want someone lazy like me?

...what did I know about him?!

Karamatsu was a man that seemed to have his life together, someone that had a well-paying job, had connections in higher places. How else could he be so fluent in two other languages? French and English...maybe he was a businessman?

With my lighter-than-normal bookbag slung over my left shoulder, I sauntered down the road towards the bus stop near school, distracting myself with the music playing through my earbuds.

Karamatsu had responded to my idea of just a 'get-to-know-you' meeting with positive feedback, something that wasn't considered a date and more than just a hangout between friends. When I had asked about meeting in a coffee shop downtown after my last final, he seemed enthusiastic...or that's how I chose to read his text.

Settling into a seat near the back of the bus, I idly watched the world pass by as my mind drifted towards the last 'date' I had with Karamatsu: skipping over the embarrassing parts and focusing on the little tidbits that I actually enjoyed.

He had tried to serenade me while we walked through the park, unable to keep his voice steady while sending sideways glances to me. The cursory looks when he took me souvenir shopping at the mention of possibly leaving the country. His steadfast confidence despite some plans going awry, continuing forward as if he had everything under control.

I recognized the surrounding scenery before getting off the bus, walking towards the aforementioned coffee shop and pulling out the earbuds. This wasn't a date -- this was me testing the waters to see if he felt about me like I did for him. If he wasn't certain of what he wanted in regards to me, or if he was just a bored rich man that only wanted the thrill of the chase, I'd walk away without much heartbreak.

A familiar haircut made itself known to me when I walked into the shop, a knitted hat sliding off as the person settled in their seat at a table near the corner. My heart skipped as I made my way over, offering a simple smile to Karamatsu.

"You made it," He gave a polite smile, "I was worried that you'd ghost me."

"Why would I ghost you?" A short laugh lept between my lips, "You're the one that was patiently waiting for me to set up this meeting."

Karamatsu's smile widened a little, his posture relaxing a little more as he tucked the hat into his red jacket pocket, "Silly girl. How was your day?"

My mind froze at the possible nickname, but I dismissed it just as quickly, "Just busy like usual. Kept my mind distracted all day while working."

"Oh, is that why I'm so tired? I must've been running through your head all day," A coy smirk settled on his lips, raising up the small menu between us a little, "Know what you want?"

"I've actually never been here," I settled into the seat, discarding the winter jacket and bookbag as I picked up the menu in front of me, "I was hoping that we'd try somewhere new."

Something akin to a sigh sounded from Karamatsu, "Sounds adventurous."

"Hot and chocolatey sounds good in this weather. Maybe something mocha?" I offered the open-ended question to him, watching him as he glanced over the menu.

"Just get the hot chocolate, then. Easy and simple."

I caught the bored look on his face, lowering my menu back to the table as I leveled an emotionless look to him, "...having a rough day at work?"

The flinch ricocheted through his body as shock spread throughout his face, trying to quickly mask it as a cough, "Work...? Yeah, it was rough. Holidays coming up has everyone at the office on edge."

"You told me that you worked at a bookstore," It was a lie. Karamatsu never told me his job.

"R-right. Well, I'm in the back office part," The man who looked like Karamatsu seemed to grow hotter under the collar.

"As a book stocker."

"Well, sometimes I help out in front, but I'm really working in the office."

I held my unimpressed look for a moment more, only raising my right eyebrow with every passing second until it couldn't go higher.

"...okay, fine. I don't have a job..." He muttered in defeat, hunching down to try and seem smaller, "It's not like you have one, either."

Unimpressed shifted into shock on my face, the man's eye holding my suddenly-suspicious glare.

"Bookbag and school logo on your scarf. Congrats on finishing the semester," He leaned back into his chair, the embarrassment and shame gone from his face, "So, why is a functioning member of society so interested in my brother?"

"Brother...?"

"Ah, he didn't mention us, then," The lookalike swiped the pad of his thumb across his bottom lip before lifting his hand to order drinks, "You're here for Karamatsu, right? I'm Osomatsu, oldest of six."

"Sextuplets, then?" I waited until he ordered his hot green tea before asking for a mocha cappuccino, continuing the conversation, "I can guess that you five embarrass the hell out of him if he never mentioned you lot."

"

He's

the one that embarasses us, sweetheart," Osomatsu hummed a little, "I'm just here to field women that could fuck him up."

I let my confused expression talk for me.

"The guy's never been that good about putting up boundaries with women he finds attractive. One woman had grabbed him and forced him to pay a restaurant bill that he was too poor for on Christmas Eve," He leaned forward a little, the shadow of his fringe casting a dark mask over his eyes, "It's my job as the oldest to ensure that no one fucks with my brothers again."

The threat was palpable.

"I'm not interested in him for money, if that's your fear," I adjusted my posture a little, "If you're just here to mess with me, then leave. Or better yet, I'll leave. Tell Karamatsu that I couldn't make it."

I flinched as his foot slammed down on my left shoe, pinning my foot down.

"What the he--" A soft brownie was shoved into my mouth, smothering my outcry of pain and sending my head reeling. The pressure on my foot lifted a little.

"You're not misreading the situation, sweetheart, but you're all Karamatsu is talking about at home. It's driving us crazy, and frankly has us concerned about him. I can see that you've got a good head on your shoulders, considering what school you're in, and you've tolerated my little brother's mimic texts," Osomatsu spoke frankly, taking a bite of the half-brownie in his hand, "I'm not here to chase you off; I'm here to make sure that you're real."

I coughed out the brownie, wiping my lips off with the back of my hand while pulling my foot out from under his, "No, I'm not doing this. I was genuinely happy to come here with Karamatsu, something that would help me relax after my finals and you've messed this up. No wonder he didn't talk about you lot to me; who would want to have brothers that constantly get in their business when they have no right to be?"

Osomatsu quickly stood up as I strode past him, dragging my jacket over my shoulders while fumbling with my bookbag. I couldn't hide the frustrated tears from him as we locked eyes, a shocked look spreading over his face.

I bumped into someone on the way out, the cold leather pressing against my face for a moment as I staggered back spewing apologies.

"Are you okay?" My name was soft on the person's lips, drawing my attention up to see a familiar man. His dark hair was partially pushed out of his face by a pair of black pointed sunglasses, the color matching the long-sleeved leather jacket draped over his shoulders, "Hey, what's wrong?"

His thumb gently brushed against my cheek and caught a tear rolling down.

"Oh, I...I need to go home."

"Something happen? Need me to escort you?"

I shook my head, ignoring the pang of my heart, "I'm good..."

"Then, I'll walk you to the bus stop, at least," The tone of his voice changed from concerned to cautious, "You don't need to tell me what happened, but let me apologize in my brother's stead."

I could only nod as he walked between me and the road, offering himself as a barrier against the bitter wind and any snow that would get thrown up from the traffic.

"I'm sorry that I didn't warn you about my brothers," His voice was quiet, "I didn't think that they'd do something like this."

"It...would've been a nice heads-up..."

"In hindsight, I should've," Karamatsu offered a small laugh, but dropped it when I didn't follow his lead, "Six brothers that always interfere in each other's lives."

"...is the number you gave me even yours?"

He stayed quiet for a moment, lowering his gaze to the pavement underneath our feet and chewing his bottom lip, "No, it's my youngest brother's. He's the only one of us to have a mobile phone and it's easier to field people through him than through the main landline at home."

"Then...you live in the same house?" I caught the hint.

"I'm still living at home with my family. As much as I hate it, it's easier to live there than on my own," Karamatsu lowered the sunglasses over his eyes, the accessory doing nothing to hide the growing blush over his cheeks, "Sorry for hiding that..."

I stepped in front of him, cutting his path off and reaching up to push his sunglasses off his eyes, "I live with my grandparents, so I understand why you wouldn't want that tidbit known to whomever you're interested in."

"You...don't live in your own house? But the pictures..."

"I took them when my grandparents were out of the house. I didn't want to look like a NEET, so I claimed it was mine...though technically it is. I'll inherit it when they pass on."

Karamatsu's face flushed more, "Do you...have anything against NEETs?"

"Not really," I shook my head, taking his sunglasses off and lifting them back onto his head, "Don't hide your face. You're pretty."

He muttered something, the stream of condensation revealing his breath.

"What?" I tilted my head to the side a little, "I said it wrong again, didn't I?"

"Say it again."

"That...you're pretty?"

"Again," He lifted his hands onto my shoulders, his dark hues swirling with pride and admiration, "Please, one more time."

"You're pretty...?"

He brought me in close for a hug, a laugh ripping from his throat before he gasped and pulled away almost immediately, "Too much contact, right? Sorry...no one's called me 'pretty' or 'handsome' before..."

I stood frozen, too stunned to speak for a moment before Karamatsu looked sorrowful.

"I'm not too good at this thing yet, but..." I tightened my fists in assurance, "Let's try another 'get-to-know-you' meeting in the future. I want to know what terms to use on you so that no one else can make you smile like me."

Karamatsu waved farewell to his potential date, seeing her safely on the bus and staying at the station as the transportation pulled away. Tucking his hands into his pockets, he hummed in satisfaction. She wanted to be the one for him; he could only hope that he met her standards.

"So...did I help at all?" Osomatsu asked from next to him, lifting a cigarette up to his mouth with an accompanying lighter.

The only answer Karamatsu gave was a strong punch to the oldest's gut, leaving him writhing on the snowy ground while walking home.

Karamatsu and Brother!Reader

Inspired by 1Freak-Show's prompt.

I had always been told that my anger was going to get me into trouble, growing frustrated at the repeated statement like nothing else was true.

My fists pummeled the sand-filled punching bag relentlessly, my muscles never tiring from the assault as my mind repeated the new scenario that presented itself in class. Himiko -- the only girl in my class that I admired for her quiet strength and wishing to grow closer to her -- was gone.

A solid 'thunk' as my left fist sunk into the punching bag, my eyes beginning to water from pain disconnected from the hit.

Himiko. The very same girl who gave me her spare pencil and gifted it to me when I tried to return it. The wonderful teenager who had a tender heart for those around her. The strong young woman who spoke loudly against bullying, even threatening to hit the bullies herself when they wouldn't back down.

My wrist crumpled as my fists began to soften, tears flooding my eyes and obscuring my vision.

Himiko...the very same girl who stood up against those oppressing others was

stolen

by the oppressors in her own life.

When my fists held no more strength, I switched to my knees and elbows, fully intent on beating the life out of the punching bag.

Himiko...had 'moved' to a different town because her 'parents' treated her like absolute

shit

, skipping town to live with her grandparents.

...it's not fair.

I barely heard the rip of fabric.

It's not fair....

My knee sunk into the solid tarp lining of the punching bag, barely indenting the packed sand.

It's not fair.

An elbow twisted the lining as I swung my full body weight into the blow.

"

It's not fair!

"

"(Y/n)?"

My tunnel-vision focus snapped mid-kick, freezing up completely in the darkness of my room. The only source of light came from the hallway through my now open door, a shadow blocking most of the illumination.

"...you were shouting."

"Sorry...big brother," I slowly stood back up as my splayed fingers caught the viciously swinging bag, stilling the motion in a few heartbeats, "Just..."

The door slowly slid closed, the room once more swallowed by the evening darkness, "Oh, you ripped it."

One of my older brothers stepped into view, his sunglasses pushed up over his fringe as his dark eyes looked over the extensive damage done to the

punching bag.

"...it can be replaced, Karamatsu."

"Yes, it can," He hummed with a smile, turning his focus towards me, "Much better buying a ¥3000 bag cover than a casket. What's got you this riled up?"

My face scrunched into a distrusting expression, unsure if I wanted to say the real reason or if I wanted to maintain my tough persona.

I flinched at the brief touch of Karamatsu's fingers against my clenched fist, recoiling harshly and taking a few steps away from his imposing posture to gain more ground mentally.

"It's just me here."

"I..." My tongue tripped over my words, "There's this girl that was in my class that I really liked. She was really strong...someone that I wanted to help whenever I could--"

Karamatsu's expression lightened, a smile creeping across his lips.

"--but she had to leave, forced to run because her parents are pieces of shit."

His face completely fell into realization, his hands resting on my shoulders, "Oh, (y/n)...do you think that's the reason?"

"I

know

it's the reason!" The verbal vitriol spat from my lips as I wrenched myself out of his grasp, leveling a glare at him, "I saw the signs of it happening but didn't do

anything

about it! Do you hear me?

Nothing!

"

"Hey--"

"Don't you fucking 'hey' me, Karamatsu!" I took another step back, moving out of his arm's reach, "I

thought

that it would be enough to offer her some form of escape while she went to school, bending backwards to ensure that she was

happy

! Instead, I...couldn't do anything."

Silence flooded the room between us while I caught my breath. I couldn't read Karamatsu's expression, my older brother standing tall with his face encapsulated by darkness.

"That feeling...I know it very well."

Before I could question him, he pivoted and sent out a vicious heel kick into the punching bag, a tearing sound echoing through the room as the sand-filled lining flew across the length of my room. A heavy silence followed the meaty 'thud' as it slammed into the opposing wall.

"I'm terrified that our brothers will suffer from my inaction," Karamatsu rolled his shoulders, lifting the leg he had used for the kick a few inches from the ground and shaking out his foot, "Scared that no matter how hard I fight, it'll all be for nothing."

My gaze fell to the floor after staring at the slumped bag, closing my mouth while relaxing my fists.

"There is something that you are able to do, little brother," His words held some kindness, drawing my attention as he moved towards me with his

arms out, taking me into his hold in a gentle hug, "Be brave. Take everything thrown at you with a smile. Don't let your enemy see that you're faltering, but remember to cry when you feel small."

"I'm...not weak," I froze at his words, frowning at the actions he spoke of.

"Even the strongest man has a sad day."

"I'm

not

weak!" I shoved Karamatsu away from me, anger fueling my words, "Everyone else can be weak, but

not me

!"

"Being human isn't weakness," The tone Karamatsu used warned me to not press him further, irritation growing in my gut as I backed away from him.

"Then I'd rather not be human!" I slammed my bedroom door behind me as I stormed out, pushing past my dad as he walked towards the kitchen.

My name died in a distant shout as I shut the front door.

I grunted as I bore the brunt of the assault, holding up my arms over my face for as long as I could before one of my classmates snuck in a gut punch, forcing me to bowl over in pain. Clenching my jaw in frustration, I took a few more kicks before the gang was waved off by the ringleader -- the very same student that Himiko had stood up to for trying to force another student to be a gopher.

"Hey, faggot," He laughed out, "You're really going to let us hit you for fifteen minutes?"

From the ground, I couldn't see the guy they were originally harassing for money.

Hopefully he fled

.

My thoughts were interrupted as a knee collided with my gut, sucking in a breath as soon as I could breath before coughing out spittle and blood.

A small respite from the beating. A few uninterrupted breaths as the pain began to fade from my body.

A mistake.

Something solid -- much more solid than a fist or foot -- slapped across my back, the sharp sting through my clothing indicating that one of the bastards grabbed a wooden plank from somewhere. Another wooden plank slammed its corner into my right leg while the other kept hitting my back like a hammer.

"Don't try to be a hero, (y/n)," The ringleader -- Mokoya, if I recalled correctly -- sounded a little further away, as if he was passively watching the 'fight', "Last time someone tried, they left."

"Don't...you fucking slander

her

name!" Adrenaline surged through my veins as I struggled to stand under the barrage, taking another punch to the shoulder before I grabbed one of the wooden planks midswing. The wielder yelped as he tried to yank it from my grip, drawing my ire as I clenched my free hand and slammed it into his nose. Taking the freed weapon, I twisted in the opposite direction and blocked the other plank homing in on my head.

"Oh, please," Mokoya taunted, "It's not like you did anything about it. She was my girlfriend, not yours."

"You didn't deserve her...!" A heavy object thwacked the back of my head, jarring me as the plank fell from my hand before I fell back to the ground. A groan slipped from my throat as I tried to protect my head from the sudden barrage of hits, feeling both plank and shoe.

I couldn't afford to be weak now...

"Well, it's been fun, (y/n), but your fifteen minutes of fame is up," Mokoya sighed as I heard footsteps approach my position, barely having any strength to look up at the ringleader. His dyed blond hair was slicked back with gel, the green contacts contrasting poorly with his naturally dark eyes, "Until tomorrow before school."

A step -- one sounding overly familiar, "I'll give you 'fun'."

Karamatsu interrupted, his fist colliding with Mokoya's face as the younger boy turned towards the shout. His other fist followed up immediately with an open hand, cupping the boy's throat and shoving him away from the group.

Another student tried to jump on Karamatsu's back, the action quickly dissuaded by his free hand grabbing the student's shirt neckline and throwing him onto another approaching bully. Shaking out his hands to loosen his muscles, Karamatsu took a few steps into the group as the students retreated back a few paces while trying to tend to Mokoya's bruised pride.

I could only stare -- one eye open in confusion with the other bruised shut -- at my older brother who had seemingly materialized out of nowhere, worried that he'd get injured at my expense and fearful that he recognized me in a weakened state.

The quick glance he gave me filled me with dread, his expression already one of recognition.

"Listen, fucker," Mokoya coughed, his voice sounding a little strained through whatever injury his nose sustained, "Step away or I'll call the police on you. You hit a minor!"

"I hit the asshole beating up my brother," Karamatsu growled out, not budging from his aggressive stance, "Go ahead and call your parents while you're at it. They need to pick up their toddler standing in front of me."

"...forget it."

I lifted my head off the ground enough to see the group recollect themselves and wander away from our location, trying to sigh but coughing instead. As my hands pressed against the ground to push myself up, another pair of hands lowered down and lightly gripped my armpits.

"Leave me...!" I snarled, reeling back from Karamatsu's reach and falling down onto the ground in frustration, "I had it handled."

"No, you didn't," My older brother looked down at me disapprovingly, his hands resting on his hips before reaching towards me again. I pushed his hands away, a frown creasing my features while maneuvering into a sitting position, "There's no one around for you to be strong for, (y/n). Let me help you."

My eyes narrowed into a glare, "Turn around."

"Come on, little brother. You don't need to be strong in front of me," He sounded defeated, his brow pinched in worry.

"Turn. Around."

Karamatsu closed his eyes with a sigh as he did as demanded.

I waited a moment to ensure that he was going to stay facing away, placing a hand on my knee while withholding the groan of pain. Standing up was more difficult than I originally thought, finally standing tall on both feet after a few agonizing minutes.

"Ready?" Karamatsu's voice was quiet in the walkway, his head partially turned towards me from over his shoulder. I couldn't see his eyes.

"Shut up," I huffed between clenched teeth. He didn't move until I did, my first step tentative before my knee gave way to gravity. I braced myself to

hit the pavement, feeling something soft underneath my chest and chin while a cloth of some kind gently rested on my bruised back.

"Really...I won't tell anyone."

Karamatsu had caught me with his back, quickly shifting me to rest fully in the piggyback position while tucking his hands underneath my hamstring muscles before I could protest. The new position allowed my body to rest from the beating, slowly closing my eyes as I pressed my nose against the round of Karamatsu's shoulders. I could feel his heart beat through the thin shirt, remembering how he had saved me from my very first fistfight in middle school.

"Do...you remember a few years back?" My voice was partially muffled by the position I was in, but I knew he heard me clearly.

"Ten on one, right?"

"Yeah," I tried to chuckle, "Someone called Jyushimatsu some kind of name..."

"You had a mean opening hit, if I recall correctly."

"Made the kid cry like a girl for an hour or so."

"Do you remember how many you took out before we had to intervene?"

I groaned as I buried my face more into his shoulder, fighting down the embarrassed blush, "One..."

Karamatsu hummed in agreement, taking confident steps towards home, "And do you remember what happened after?"

"...no..." It was more of a plea than a confession.

"You were so proud of what you did that you bragged about it to Mom and Dad, who reprimanded you for acting in a cowardly way," I felt Karamatsu's cheek barely press against my ear in reassurance, "But then we went out to oden afterwards."

"...are you suggesting that we go out for oden tonight?" I closed my eyes against the fading sunset, the light streaming through the taller buildings on the city's horizon.

"I'm always up for Chibita's oden," Another voice chimed in, "As long as someone else is paying."

A growl rumbled in my throat as I lifted my head to see the oldest sextuplet standing in front of Karamatsu and I.

In fact, all of my brothers were standing in a line like they had been expecting us.

Todomatsu giggled as he lifted his phone, the loud camera shutter sounding out a snapshot, "So cute! Our little (y/n)'s first high school scrap!"

"Shut up!" I tried to jump off Karamatsu's back, desperately wanting to get out of the weakened position I found myself in. His hands refused to budge.

"If I let you go, you're just gonna fall again. Did you want to give them more ammo?" Karamatsu's voice was quiet, a knowing smile resting on his lips.

"...fuck. I hate all of you."

I dug my face against his shoulder again to hide the happy look on my face, fully understanding that me being stubborn and tough wasn't going to do me any good currently.

I'd wait until I recovered from this fight...then I'd kick the crap out of Todomatsu and delete that picture.

Poseidon!Karamatsu and Reader

A twinge of guilt tugged at his heart, his sea-blue eyes watching on passively as the infant whale mourned its fate. It was well within his reach to send a wave surge and drag the helpless creature back into the safety of the ocean, back to its mother waiting worriedly as she sang for it to return home.

...but it was not his decision to save the newborn. He had lost many children -- young and old -- to this before and he knew he would lose more in the same way; it was no longer his place to interfere.

The mother sang out for the pod to wait, for the child to come back, for something to help her calf.

If the Fates played their strings right, the children of Titans would tend to their cousins.

The pod stayed close; the mother continued to sing.

His eyes partially closed as the sun ventured forth in its set path, Apollo tending to the day.

The fist gripping his trident tightened further as he fully closed his eyes, his heart heavy while a sorrowful frown pulled his lips downward. He should tend to the mother, help her grieve--

A yell for help snapped his attention back towards the shore, his eyes catching the sight of a young woman ripping off her sundress and unfurling her beach towel before shoving them into the crashing waves mere feet from the beached calf. With both items fully laden with seawater, she lifted them as a ball and spread each out over the newborn, waving her arms above her head as she repeated her shout.

Only a few responded to her call after a few crucial moments, the woman frantically kicking and splashing water from the waves to the calf. Two of

the humans stood to the side with devices in their hands, useless.

An expression of anger flashed on his face, moving away before the mother nudged his arm with her chin.

"They don't want to help your child," He spoke freely despite being surrounded by water, his long flowing hair trailing behind him as he moved to leave once more.

'That one does,' the mother sang back.

He looked at the pod, each whale echoing her words.

"She is one of billions. One cannot make a difference."

'Do you not hear my child? He will sing of her actions to his children, to his grandchildren, to his great-grandchildren.'

'Please, King,' sang the pod in unison, 'The one is crying for help.'

'The few will bear witness to the one.'

His lips mashed together in an expression of confusion and conflict before his body surged towards the shore, the golden crown resting high on his head freely melding with the gold buckle pinning his long hair back, the jewels merging into one aquamarine gem. The scaled armor spread from his arms and legs to cover his waist and chest, releasing their taut hold and becoming loose as his golden gauntlets and greaves shrank into golden bracelets and anklets. His trident disappeared in a torrent of bubbles, scattering in his underwater wake as he veered away from the beached calf with the intent on surfacing further from the scuffle.

He knew that the humans would panic if they saw him emerge from where they were trying to push the calf.

As he breached the water, his bare footsteps certain, the loosened blue scaled armor finally gave way and melted into an open front shirt bearing the same pattern and a pair of black modern swim trunks. His furious sea-blue gaze swept across the growing gathering of humans and only saw a

handful of people attempting to roll the calf from its back towards the sea, one or two others splashing buckets of water on top of the varied cloth articles on top of the creature.

The young woman was shouting orders to the others helping her, burying her right shoulder into the fatty blubber of the whale calf and yelling in exertion as the ramshackle team tried to hold it against the pushing flow of the waves as the tide slowly crept in.

"Head towards the ocean! Head towards the ocean!" She called out, her hands pushing the calf's chin while the others pushed in tandem with her along its head. They pushed in time with the waves rolling out, bracing when the waves came in to keep their position.

He joined the others, placing his hands against the rubbery skin of the calf and nearly missed the shout to push, his nerves nearly overwhelmed by the joyful thrum of the calf. Its unspoken words sang praises of the Titan children, entirely heedless of its own life as he felt the skin meant for living underwater dry in the blazing sun.

One more shout -- this one of warning -- as a larger wave crashed against the calf, the creature rolling over limply while its pectoral fins slammed heavily against the ebbing water.

The woman was the first to rush back as the wave pulled away from the shore, her frustration echoed amongst the throng as the single wave undid all of the progress made in the past hour.

He was close enough to her to hear the whispers she gave the calf, regardless of the language barrier, "It's okay. We'll give it another try, just hold on."

'King!' The calf sang through its blowhole, the crowd taking it as one final plea to the humans or a desperate call to its mother, 'The few bear witness to the one!'

His face tightened in frustration, its words repeated by the pod just offshore, "I know...I know!"

"Hey," A small hand lay over his right hand, drawing his full attention to find the young woman offering a comforting smile, "Let the ocean do most of the heavy lifting. Push with the receding tide. We'll get him home."

He only offered a slight nod, withholding the look of contempt at the unbidden touch.

His position was mimicked once more by the others willing to help, each of them either ready to push on the calf's head or pull its tail in order to straighten the whale's position.

A clenched inhale of air, an exhale of desperation.

"Come on, Poseidon, be with me this time."

His eyes flew wide, the sea-blue hues sweeping towards the young woman on his right as she stared out to sea. It was

his name

that was uttered from her lips.

In an age that mortals had forgotten him,

this one

spoke his name.

She ignored his shocked stare, her own hues widening at the sudden surge of waves and caught off-guard before she could warn the others to back away.

The first wave slammed over the calf, its cresting froth shoving the creature into the humans attempting to help it and pushing them back as he backpedaled with the crowd. The woman disappeared under the calf, its song turning into wailing.

The second wave shoved the newborn whale into a correct heading, offering enough depth under the creature to encourage it to deeper waters. A slap of

its massive tail crashed into the receding water, a third wave washing over its body completely and pushing off the water laden clothes from its back before pulling the calf deeper.

He urged the waters to bring the calf back home, the waters responding to his command easily while his legs glided through the turbulent waves towards where the woman had disappeared, his hands reaching down into the deep surf. He could see her clearly through the water, a pained expression set on her face as she clawed at the sand holding her left leg captive, shoved down and at an odd angle by the calf's roll.

Another joined his rescue, each of them grabbing hold of her arms and dragging her up to the surface, her deep inhale followed by a scream of pain.

"It's her leg," He spoke calmly, urging the other human to gather her things, "It will need to be braced, but it isn't broken."

While the humans around him celebrated, he focused on the woman in his arms, "Your name."

"...(Y/n)..." She whimpered as her hand brushed against the aggravated limb, "Ah, is the calf okay?"

"It has returned to the ocean."

"Then...it won't die here," He became enraptured by the hopeful smile resting on (y/n)'s lips, briefly overriding the pain before the other human came back with her dress and towel, "Oh...umm, do you mind carrying those, too?"

The question was directed towards him, his response a brief nod. The human draped the articles around the back of his neck, thanking the woman in his arms before rejoining those he came with.

The crowd slowly dispersed as the waters withdrew to their original level, leaving him and the woman alone for the moment before he began walking towards where he had seen the closest medical facility for mortals. She

didn't voice her discomfort, but he could feel her leg muscles struggling to pull the limb back into place.

"You risked much for the calf."

"It's what I do," She grunted as he climbed a sand dune with ease, the view suddenly revealing human civilization, "A dislocated limb is better than another beached whale found dead."

"You would do it again?" He raised a thick eyebrow at the statement, catching her wording.

"Always," She shifted her gaze up towards him, her hues catching the sunlight and revealing the varied shades of color deep within them, "I'd never forgive myself if I walked away from a marine creature in trouble."

"Even if it meant you died in exchange?"

"Then I can only hope that my death ignites a flame in someone else to carry on the work humans need to do here. We're the ones who can help our planet heal, to correct the damage we've done in negligence."

He only hummed quietly in response, the shade of a manmade building drawing his attention from her eyes. When he ensured that she was fully checked in, he left without another word.

He couldn't believe it, even if the Fates had warned him of such a thing happening.

The same beachhead, the same woman albeit older.

"You're a fool." His words had no target, his gaze hardening in resolution as his grip tightened on his trident.

It was indeed the same woman as before, though time did not treat her kindly.

Her hair was longer, though lightened by the sun's touch. Her skin was less than fair, the reddish hues on her bare shoulders indicating that she had been without protection for some time.

It was the lack of limbs that snared his attention initially, the woman working with only one arm while the other appeared to have been snapped or bitten off near the shoulder. The same shoulder that she was bracing herself against the beached whale calf while struggling to roll it back towards the water.

The calf itself was tossed upon the shore with abandon, losing track of the tides while it had played in the shallows. Now, it was barely covered with a drying towel and dress and far from the shoreline.

This calf would die.

He needed to move on. Let the mortal struggle alone like a fool.

'King,' A lone voice sang out from the depths, the calf he helped save now fifteen years older and well into its younger years, 'The few bear witness to the one.'

"That damned phrase again," He snarled, swiping his free hand towards the bull whale, "Enough. I will not play the same role for this one."

'I sang her praises to my child,' The whale thrummed urgently, slowly moving closer to the oceanic deity, 'The one already sings to you.'

"I don't care!" His sea-blue hues swirled, streaks of light acting as a warning to the creatures around him, "You were foolish to not warn your calf of the dangers, she is foolish to try! Together, they will be witnessed as fools!"

His own heart thumped heavily, a growing weight within his chest as his soul begged for him to act. Furious that his own flesh was rebelling against his wishes, he let out a roar of frustration that echoed through the waters endlessly.

The bull stilled, the calf fell silent, the waters trembled as they calmed.

The woman cried out

his

name.

"Poseidon, please! I trade my life for theirs!"

He stood limply in the dark waters, his eyes losing their ferocity as he slowly looked upwards through the surface to see her true desperation. No one had offered him a trade in generations that he forgot what a contract felt like, forgot the thrill of holding a Titan child's life in his hands.

He raised himself upwards, fully emerging from the still ocean water in his fully armored glory, holding his trident proudly as his sea-blue hues narrowed at the woman now crying over the still calf.

The sound of his watery arrival drew her attention to his form standing on the surface, her eyes growing wide as she struggled to take a breath in, "...you answered...! Poseidon, you--!"

"You wish to trade your life for this one?" His words silenced her exclamation, "Why do you believe it's a fair trade?"

"It's not, as months are nothing to this calf...but they're everything to me," She responded, tears falling from her eyes as she continued to struggle in pushing the calf towards the ocean now meters away, "I offer you my life to help this calf back home."

"And if I decline your trade," His gaze hooded, the sunlight enrapturing the smothered hues and reflecting the color brilliantly through the shadow of his fringe.

"...you're not the only deity of oceans that humans believe in," (Y/n) released a strained groan as the calf's body refused to budge under her efforts, "One of them will be willing to take me."

His eyes fully closed, letting a breath's span drift in the silence before urging the waters to rise. Waves curled over each other as they raced onto the dried sand, enveloping the dying whale calf and bringing it back into the blissful dark waters.

The woman coughed and sputtered in the aquatic onslaught, stumbling over her poor footing and crashing into the water as it receded to leave an empty beach.

When she didn't immediately recover, he stepped closer and willed the waters away from her form, genuflecting next to (y/n)'s body. He knew that he didn't complete the contract, her weakness intriguing him as his golden gauntlet brushed away some strands of hair, "A fool, indeed -- but one now under my protection."

The sun lowered a little more in the sky before she stirred, finding her upper body propped up on a cool surface as she moved her hand upwards to change her posture. Blue scales greeted her eyes and touch as she moved, drawing her attention towards the deity offering his lap as cushion while she lay unconscious.

"You...You didn't have to do that," (Y/n) stammered as she swallowed thickly, her throat parched from the sun's constant barrage. He merely raised an eyebrow as his gaze followed her movement.

"For someone so weak, it would be cruel of me to rip your life away while in such a state."

"...says the cruel god of the sea," She huffed, hissing out in pain as her hand brushed against the sunburnt shoulder, "Why didn't you?"

"Finish the trade? Your words intrigued me," The lie was easy to speak, finding himself unable to pull her life from the suffering husk of flesh. He was willing, but his heart balked at the thought.

Despite aging fifteen years since he last saw her, she still held a youthful grace as she stood up and draped the dress over her battered form, "It's what happens when someone can't afford treatment: they slowly suffer in their

symptoms and ebb like the tide...slowly pulling away before completely receding when no one's paying attention."

"Treatment...?" He followed her motions, standing up as the sand fell from his armor. Not a single grain clung to him.

"Drugs, blood transplant...that sort of thing," She looked back up at him, the vivid color he remembered now dull in spite of the brilliant sunshine, "Everything humans create is bought at a price, and the price for an easier life is too much for me to pay."

"There are no others willing to take your burden?" When her staggered steps turned into a more even rhythm, he followed her out of curiosity.

"Plenty, but I'm too old to qualify. I have no children that are wanting me to survive, no spouse wishing to see me recover, no family that remains by my side," (Y/n) barely turned back towards the deity, "I do my part for your oceans so something can remember me after I'm gone."

"I can change you into a servant."

"You wouldn't want someone like me serving you, Poseidon. I'm too much trouble," A laugh, albeit a small one, left her lips as she took a step onto a wooden platform that wrapped around a small building. The structure was small, much smaller than where he had left her previously, its size indicative of a housing unit, "Besides, you must be busy with your other godly duties to train me. The most I would ever ask is you to escort me home...which you have."

"Your home is in my waters," He barely stepped onto the patio when his armor melded and drifted away to leave behind the clothes she had seen him in previously, "I will escort you there when the time has come."

The deity didn't have to wait long as the sun began to set on the fourth day, his fingers pausing in the meticulous chore of washing dishes while his gaze swept back towards (y/n), her body resting in her favorite reclining chair with a book in her hand.

"(Y/n), if we wait any longer..." His voice was gentle, her name falling from his lips like honey.

"I know...I feel it, too," She released a long sigh as she closed the book, resting it on her lap, "Do you...remember your offer to me?"

"Always," He stood tall, his hands dripping with water and soap bubbles as he moved towards her.

"I think...I'll accept it after all," A lone tear fell down her cheek, her only hand not bothering to wipe it away, "You've...been more of a friend than I could ask for in this situation. The joy you've brought to these last few days...I wish to return the favor to you."

"Are you certain?" He held out a hand for her to take, his eyes soft as she carefully took it.

"More than anything else, Poseidon."

With his help, she took tentative steps upon the beach where they had met fifteen years ago. The waters were calm, serene, as if the very ocean could sense what was happening.

Her fingers intertwined with his, her grip unsteady and afraid.

"What if this goes wrong? What if you turn me into something not useful?" She paused as his golden greaves entered the water, drawing his focus to her uncertain expression.

"The form I will give will be my steed, an equal partner in battle and a steadfast friend in long journeys."

"You're gonna ride me?" She tried to sound insulted before letting out a laugh, the sound mirrored by his own voice.

"Would you prefer a more debaucherous term? Mount, straddle, atop, in charge--" He tried to continue before she nudged his arm with her shoulder, both of their laughter echoing into the fading light. When she meant to speak out her retort, he caught the slack expression on her face before

immediately catching her frail figure, "...we'll have time for joking later, (y/n)."

She could only look up at him in agreement, barely nodding as he changed his grip on her form. Lifting her up so that she remained cradled in his arms, he took longer strides into the water as the sun flashed its last light on the horizon.

Merman!Karamatsu and Reader

Inspired by nursingdrugreference's prompt.

(This takes place in an alternate timeline of 'With Lungs Like Gills', where Karamatsu still has his full merman form. Karamatsu has full range from baritone to bottom bass, all of which can be heard in the video.

)

(Above is the inspiration of what Karamatsu's tail would look like, though the caudal fin would look more like a lyretail guppy's tail fin, as shown below:)

His chest heaved as blood swirled in the water surrounding him, his sharp fangs and taloned fingers stained with the same color while his eyes never lost their hatred.

The metal hull of the humans' research vessel sank into the dark abyss beneath him, not a single person surviving the underwater attack after he methodically sang his tune to enchant them. They had all fallen to his ability, most of them throwing themselves willingly overboard while a select few stayed onboard to ensure that the ship would destroy itself.

His glowing blue hues briefly locked on to the female scientist, her green eyes dull and lifeless as blood slowed its ebb from the gaping wound nearly severing her head from her body. As soon as she revealed his existence to the others onboard, the disgusting human signed over her life while he listened to her through the bottom hull.

Karamatsu was a fool to even entertain the idea that there may have been a single human that was innocent of the crimes Osomatsu condemned them for.

"Your lines have grown."

Closing his eyes and pulling his attention from the massacre sinking deeper under him, Karamatsu let out a long sigh before casting a glance over his shoulder, "Then you haven't found a cure?"

The red lionfish merman barely shook his head as his own dark hues followed the trail of death and destruction, his pectoral fins flaring a little to remain in position, "Todomatsu has been less than helpful while Jyushimatsu refuses to answer my call."

Running his hands through his hair, Karamatsu closed his eyes once more, the thundering in his chest finally quieting as the anger quelled into subdued understanding. Of sound mind once more, he turned to fully face his older brother, "Those two are the ones that want to use this...curse. It doesn't surprise me that they aren't cooperating."

"Considering that the others have been willing to look for clues in their own oceans, I'm willing to bet that the origin of this started with either of them," The red merman adjusted his posture as Karamatsu swam closer to him, moving alongside the blue merman, "Ichimatsu said that he'd look at the seabed of his ocean, making the off-hand comment that there might've been something near the boundary."

"Then we're still looking for answers," Karamatsu gave a long look to his brother's finned form, eyeing the damage from a recent fight that had torn his soft dorsal fin nearly in two. Five of the nine venomous spines on his spiny dorsal fin showed signs of use, the flesh sheaths bearing gashes that could only come from a rough-scaled creature, "That wasn't from Jyushimatsu, right, Osomatsu?"

The red merman hummed questioningly, raising an eyebrow before following Karamatsu's gaze, "Ah...no. Just had to fight a tiger shark from

my home. It tasted great, though. I'd recommend it if you can find one in open water."

"Stop going out on long swims and your cave won't be stolen from you," Karamatsu quipped with a smirk, his hands pushing aside some floating seaweed.

"Staying in one place isn't my thing," Osomatsu responded with a wide grin, "If I ever do settle down, it'll be on a shipwreck or something. I wanna live in something that's as flashy as me."

Karamatsu opened his eyes to gaze at the veil between sea and sky high above him, wanting desperately to know how life would've been for him if he had played along with that scientist's games all those years ago.

Maybe they could've become closer.

Maybe she would've killed him.

A rumble rolled within his chest as he sat up from the rocky platform serving as his secluded resting area, his long tail laying limp over its edge as he felt the deep current tug on the skin between the tail cartilage spines. His hair had grown out a little more than he usually kept it, fixing more blue hammer coral to keep the loose strands back behind his ear fins.

The flash of a recent memory raced through his mind, drawing a smile to his lips as he felt the small ghost hands of a human child gently brushing against the ear fins that were overly sensitive underwater. Her fingers would play with his tail fins, the pride of the merman as he relaxed on the shoreline.

Karamatsu's eyes partially hooded as he wondered if there would be a time that he wouldn't need to sing her memory of every meeting into a dream.

Perhaps...this human child would be the one to prove Osomatsu wrong about the evildoings of humanity.

He stealthily made his way towards the swimming beach the human child was usually at, Karamatsu's eyes catching a lone human treading water on the surface before ducking close to the sandy bottom, using the rocky outcroppings as a means to stay out of sight while he surveyed the scenery.

The swimmer was bipedal, masculine in form.

Karamatsu's eyes narrowed in anger while the slight feeling of happiness was squashed beneath the heavy emotion.

Had the child exposed his presence? Was he wrong about the little girl?

His ear fins picked up movement behind him, the methodical pulsing sounding like a heart struggling to pump blood.

Karamatsu quickly glanced over his shoulder, his eyes widening in shock as he took in the slightly larger frame of what he remembered the human child holding. Her eyes and hair were the same color, the excited expression on her face was nearly smothered by the desperate need to

breathe

.

'

Foolish child

,' he thought as he watched her change directions, heading to the surface in a near panic. Karamatsu let out a soft laugh, his tail effortlessly pushing him through the water until he was next to her, "You didn't need to swim down to me, little minnow."

The frustrated expression she bore was priceless, her hands slapping against his chest as he laughed out loud while bringing her small frame against his body. With a few powerful strokes of his tail, they broke through the surface together and he released his grip on her.

"You...absolute jerk!" She turned towards him, her fists barely making a sound against his muscular chest, "I knew you were real!"

Karamatsu's eyes hooded as the smile remained on his lips. She always said the same thing when she saw him, his song only making their time together a dream in her mind.

He couldn't bring himself to completely erase himself from her memory for some reason.

"I'm as real as the sea and sky," Karamatsu repeated his old confirmation, steadying the grown child when she faltered to tread water, "Now that you've found me, what would you like to do?"

Her colored eyes turned downward, slightly leaning forward until her forehead rested against Karamatsu's chest.

The action surprised him, his eyes blinking rapidly for a moment before he rested his hands on her upper arms, the material of her skinsuit slick in the water, "(Y/n)?"

"...how do I know that you're actually real this time?" Her words were easily heard despite being spoken towards the water's surface, "How do I know that this isn't a dream...?"

Karamatsu's eyes hooded in a dangerous glare, the smile partially falling into a deep frown.

This had to be the last time they'd meet.

She was becoming immune to his softer songs, which meant he'd have to sing deeper and he knew that the lower his voice went, the more powerful his commands became.

He was a siren, after all.

Before (y/n) lifted her head, Karamatsu reset his expression, "Assume for the moment that I'm real. Let's spend the rest of the day like you've always dreamt."

"(Y/n)?"

Karamatsu tensed up, mentally yelling at himself for forgetting about the

other

human swimming nearby.

"Genki," She hastily responded, looking around Karamatsu's shoulder while trying to push the merman behind her, "You must've just gotten here. Sorry about that...I was busy snorkeling."

"I know," The younger human male huffed in distaste as his green eyes locked onto Karamatsu's dark hues, "Who the hell are you?"

"The swimmer that's helping (y/n) train," He responded immediately, urging his ear fins to remain still. It would be better if the boy thought they were mere decoration, "Are you from the diving school she attends?"

"Yeah, I'm her boyfriend."

"Genki!" The tone (y/n) used alerted Karamatsu to the lie.

"Shut it, (y/n)," Genki nearly shouted, causing her to flinch back into Karamatsu as he held his position, "How would it look for you if I told the teachers that you're using the extra credit lessons to hook up with some random guy? He's, what, twenty-something years old and you're fourteen."

"I'm not--" (Y/n)'s flustered face looked up towards Karamatsu's before focusing back on Genki, "You don't--"

Karamatsu could feel her frustration and confusion roll from her, trembling shoulders causing the calm surface around her to ripple. His heart yearned to help her in some way, the conflicting emotions prevalent on her face. His hands lifted up and sealed over her ears, keeping her close as his dark hues swirled with a blue glow.

He didn't need to hear anything else from the teen's lips, his very being urging him to remove the insect from (y/n)'s life.

His lips parted with a rolling, wordless bass tune echoing out as the primal command to '

leave

' fell on Genki's ears. '

Hide

' and '

drown

' soon followed as Karamatsu's tone deepened to a near dark growl.

The human's eyes widened in fear before glassing over as his body helplessly followed the simple commands, turning back towards shore.

Karamatsu allowed his hands to be pulled from (y/n)'s ears when he was certain that the song had implanted itself into the insect's head, his glowing gaze fading as he looked down at her, "He shouldn't bother you anymore, (y/n)."

"What did you do to him?" She looked shaken, a small seed of worry bubbling up in his gut if she had heard the song through his chest. (Y/n) clung to his hands, her fingers trembling despite the warm water surrounding them.

"I told him to leave," He gave a small smile as he remained in place. His ear fins picked up the noise of water sloshing to see the teenager stagger out of the water before turning towards the shoreline leading away from the beach, "Did I scare you?"

"...you're sure he's gonna be okay?" She looked over her shoulder to watch Genki, glancing back when he disappeared from view, "He's...not in trouble, is he?"

Karamatsu's lips softened into a gentle grin, releasing one of her hands as he began to pull her along the surface, "I don't have any more issue with

him."

"The song you sang...it was familiar."

"I must've sang it in one of your dreams, then."

"So, you're really a merman?" (Y/n)'s hues sharpened with curiosity, her fear quelled for the moment. Karamatsu allowed her to reach up to touch his ear fins, instinctively flicking them when she hovered over the webbing longer than he liked, "Oh, it's real..."

"Everything about me is real, (y/n)."

She sucked in a breath and ducked under the water, drawing his attention as she dove down towards his tail fin. Karamatsu watched her carefully as he slowed his movement, her fingers reaching out towards the strings of shells that hung around his waist and tail in long, continuous and lazy loops. Blue hammer coral ended each loose strand, acting as light weights to keep the jewelry from floating away from the merman.

(Y/n) brought up one of the coral ends and smiled up at him while placing it on her hair just above her right ear. He gave a silent laugh in response before a flash of red caught his eye.

A little glass bottle hung limply around her neck on a braided cord, the thing previously tucked away safely in her skinsuit. Inside the clear bottle was a small leaflet of red coral.

Anger and fear battled each other within Karamatsu's mind, his face struggling to hide both emotions as (y/n) continued exploring how his tail fins moved and flexed..

That red coral wasn't a mere decoration. It was a symbol that the six merman brothers had been using for those that gained their favor. The coral was forever tied to the brother that gave it, acting as a warning signal when the gift recipient was in danger in the water.

The color and type of coral signified which brother it was tied to.

(Y/n) had been given favor by Osomatsu.

The oldest brother would know immediately if Karamatsu tried giving her his own favor, and a war with the strengthening demigod wasn't something Karamatsu could afford. He was a powerful siren, but he had little control over the water or sky.

No...he was considered a healer by his brothers, his own blood acting as a healing agent. They had come to him since he discovered his second ability, Karamatsu creating lathers and gels that would help his healing blood stay on their bodies underwater.

Karamatsu's resolution grew as (y/n) held his hand, signaling to surface.

He

would

erase every memory of himself from her mind.

"Your tail," (Y/n) excitedly spoke first after she breached, taking in a fresh lungful of air before continuing, "It's just as beautiful as I dreamt it being! It's a...lyretail fin, right?"

"Something like that," The blue merman played along, guiding her back to shore as she subconsciously moved with him, "Tell me, little minnow, what are your goals in life?"

"You mean...what do I want to do when I'm older?"

Karamatsu gave a small nod, his hands brushing against the sandy bottom as gentle waves lapped onto the shore only feet away from where they were. (Y/n) pushed herself further towards the shore and turned so that she could sit on the sand to face him.

"Well...I'm not really sure," She pursed her lips in thought as her eyes lowered to the glass bottle hanging around her neck. (Y/n) held it for a moment between her fingers before tucking it back into the wetsuit,

"Something definitely with the water. Maybe a saturation diver? Or a freelance SCUBA photographer?"

"Any reason why?" Karamatsu pressed, staying at arms length from her.

"I love the water and the creatures that live in it," She lifted her eyes to him with a gentle smile, "Heck, if I could be a mermaid, I'd take the chance in a heartbeat."

"May you find what you're looking for..." Karamatsu closed his eyes for a moment, seeing the surprise on (y/n)'s face when he opened them again. The glowing blue reflection in her colored hues was obvious to him, "Without me."

A soft and deep rumble vibrated in his throat, a wordless tune carried on the breath past his lips as he quietly urged (y/n) to '

forget

', to '

erase

' the memories of him from her mind. He sang as low as he could, watching in heartbreak as her face shifted from shock and confusion to emotionless and hollow. His song buried itself deep within her mind, mentally destroying the 'dreams' of the blue merman.

Karamatsu gently caught the limp (y/n) before she could fall back into the water she loved, bringing her closer to shore and laying her head above the tide's line in the sand.

He didn't speak, knowing that anything could break her mind free from his command.

With a last glance over his shoulder, Karamatsu sank deep under the water's calm surface. His blue gaze hardened into hate, turning towards where the insect had drowned himself.

The last use that body could offer was a disguise for Karamatsu should the merman ever need to walk the surface world.

Karamatsu hurt all over, his throat numb from exertion while he floated nearly motionless in the open ocean.

The sinking vessel underneath him bled oil and fuel as it sank, the flotsam drifting upwards past the blue merman in a perverse show of tranquility. The red blood that filled the waters wasn't his own.

"If you keep this up, you're gonna lose yourself faster than me."

Karamatsu's eyes opened into a glare, focusing on the surface far above him, "You're the last one that needs to tell me that."

The flash of red and white fins darted across his vision, the regal display of aquatic toxicity revealing the oldest brother's presence, "Well...I'm just worried about you. This makes it the seventeenth research vessel this week. Any more of this and I'll lose you too."

"Since when have you ever cared about any of us?"

"Since we were born," Osomatsu coasted to a stop over Karamatsu, looking down at the younger while remaining safely out of his physical reach, "Even more so now that both Jyushimatsu and Todomatsu have gone rogue. I don't want to lose anyone else to this curse."

Karamatsu huffed as he pushed himself into a righted position, the older brother mirroring his movements, "Is that why you've called us into your sea?"

"For the most part, yes," Osomatsu scratched his right cheek with an index finger, his eyes partially closing in admittance, "The other reason is that I need your help."

"And what could you possibly need my help for?"

"There's...a human that--"

"I already know about that," Karamatsu hissed out in anger, turning away from the oldest, "You don't need to brag to me about claiming her."

"That's...actually why I need your help," The soft tone Osomatsu used drew Karamatsu's focus back to the eldest brother, "I...didn't actually claim her. The last human to have my claim was Totoko, but this one

isn't

Totoko. I don't know how she got her hands on it."

"You're the one with a human disguise. Just go on shore and take it back."

"I

can't

, Karamatsu," Osomatsu moved a little closer, "She's not like the other female humans I've encountered."

Karamatsu blinked before narrowing his gaze, "You're asking me to use my siren voice on her...because you don't know how to talk to her?"

A furious blush swept over Osomatsu's cheeks.

Karamatsu pressed a hand against his face, "I swear...how cruel of the fates to give you god-like powers but stunt your emotional maturity to that of a six-year-old human..."

Silence filled the waters between them for a moment before Karamatsu lowered his hand, "Should I be able to get your claim back, what will you do with it?"

"Give it back to Totoko. Choromatsu is able to keep the rogue brothers at bay, but our corals are the only thing that can keep her completely safe."

"And if this new claim holder becomes their target instead?"

"Oh, I don't care about her. She's nobody," Osomatsu's worried expression fell completely from his face, the neutral look nearly chilling Karamatsu at the immediate discard.

"...fine," The agreement slipped past Karamatsu's lips unwillingly, "You owe me a favor."

"You got it."

He stared up in shock as a tall man-made building stood where the beach had been previously, its foundation pillars drilled deep into the sandy bottom as aquatic life used the concrete in place of the small coral it destroyed.

How much time had passed since he was last here?

Karamatsu slowly made his way along the shoreline, staying deep enough to not be seen by wandering humans but close enough so he could observe the changes that humanity had made.

Many more buildings had been erected since his last visit, civilization spreading its disgusting tendrils along the seaside country. It mirrored the advances that humanity had made with its seaworthy vessels, wood and timber being replaced by metal and glass, sails and oars changing to propellers.

The scars along his torso and tail would proclaim the leaps in technology, every ship that ever caught him in their harpoons and nets were dragged to their doom and ensured they could never be found.

Karamatsu hated it all.

His ear fins picked up the sounds of shouting before he rounded the edge of the steep coral reef, looking up to the surface to see a human treading water with...one of his brothers?

The tail was elongated and formed a spearhead as the fin tapered off, the coloration was darker than the surrounding water.

Ichimatsu?

Karamatsu moved closer, more curious than anything else as to why his deep water brother was at the surface.

"Then I hope you drown," The voiced threat definitely belonged to his younger brother.

"Maybe I should've yesterday, but Yamano saved me so I'm not going to let that happen again."

Karamatsu's heart skipped a beat, taking a breath in surprise as the human sounded like an older (y/n), no longer a child or teenager...but a full-grown adult.

"There's nothing special about him. He's an egotistical bastard that constantly gets in my way throughout my life," With a flick of his tail, Ichimatsu dove down towards the coral edge where Karamatsu remained. The older brother pressed himself against the rocky precipice, his fins stilling and spreading out against the rough rock to keep hidden.

The name 'Yamano' was well-known to Karamatsu. It was the name of Osomatsu's human disguise, an old family name that the mermen brothers had long abandoned in favor of their individual names.

His ear fins picked up the sounds of someone diving after Ichimatsu, more than likely (y/n).

"You just won't quit, will you? I don't want you around, faker, and I don't need your pathetic pity!" Ichimatsu shouted out before lowering his voice to a growl, "I should've killed you yesterday...maybe I'll finish the job today."

An underwater cry for help, the thick scent of blood in the water.

Karamatsu's heart begged for him to help his favorite human child, but hatred only dared him to get involved. If he intervened, he would only open

himself up for hurt...just like he did for the scientist years ago.

He waited for the red coral to send a warning to Osomatsu.

Ichimatsu sank his teeth into (y/n)'s left shoulder.

There was no warning.

The coral was dead

.

Karamatsu swore to himself as he charged upwards from around the drop off, withholding from producing any vocal sounds while his eyes took in the sight of his younger brother completely dominating the helpless swimmer. The purple tail was wrapped around her form and bound her legs and arms together while his fingers dug into her upper arms, his jaw clamped onto her left shoulder.

"Ichimatsu, stop!" The plea left the blue merman's lips unbidden, drawing the attention of the purple merman.

Ichimatsu's eyes widened as his jaw became slack, his body releasing its hold on (y/n) before she used the distraction to flee towards the surface.

"...why?" The fourth merman brother stilled as Karamatsu swam closer, his hands curling up and relaxing as he tried to process what was going on, "What are you doing here?"

"Osomatsu called in a favor. You need to leave that human alone."

"He...he told me I could kill her!" Ichimatsu shook his head, the dark hair spreading out behind the purple ear fins and coral headdress that kept most of his hair out of his face.

"You misunderstand me, little Ichimatsu," Karamatsu swam past the other merman, lowering a demanding glare to him, "I'm the one telling you to leave (y/n) alone."

The surprise melted from Ichimatsu's face as anger quickly took over, the purple markings along his chest and arms flaring to life, "You think you have the right to make demands of me?"

Karamatsu quickly spun around, baring his fangs and spreading all of his fins as far as they could go. It wasn't as dramatic a display as Osomatsu could produce, but it was enough of a deterrent, "I won't repeat myself, Ichimatsu."

Both merman remained poised for a fight before Ichimatsu pushed himself away with a flick of his tail, retreating into darker waters while Karamatsu relaxed his threat display.

The heavy scent of blood in the water drew the blue merman's attention back upwards, seeing the woman struggling to swim any further than where she surfaced. His eyes hooded warily as he cautiously swam up towards her, avoiding being kicked while his hands gently rested along her upper arms.

"No, get off!" She shouted, her right hand trying to shove Karamatsu away from her before whimpering in pain.

"You're injured," Karamatsu concluded, his tail easily keeping him above the waterline as he observed her wounds.

Ichimatsu had bitten deep into her left shoulder, her blood ebbing over his hand into the water. There were numerous scratches along her arms and chest, the wetsuit torn and shredded where Ichimatsu's talons had dug in. With how (y/n) was swimming, Karamatsu wouldn't be surprised if there were wounds along her right leg.

"Thanks for stating the obvious--what the fuck are you doing?!" (Y/n)'s voice rose in panic as she pounded her fist against Karamatsu's chest, his arms lifting her mostly out of the water, "Put me down!"

"Sleep."

The simple command was uttered in a light tone, but (y/n)'s body immediately obeyed his order. Karamatsu's gaze softened as she lay limp in

his hold, knowing how exhausted she must've been to fall under his gentle song.

Her wounds needed tending to immediately, but he needed a hiding place to ensure he wouldn't be caught.

Biting the inside of his cheek harshly, Karamatsu tasted the familiar metallic copper fill his mouth before he bent over her left shoulder and licked the gouging teeth marks. His blood-coated tongue applied a fine layer, the wound sealing up enough to slow the bleed rate.

"Not perfect, but it doesn't need to be..." He muttered to himself, spitting out the excess.

The empty beachhead he found wasn't terribly far away from where (y/n) had been with Ichimatsu, but it was hidden from prying eyes by way of a steep cliffside that appeared to head off a small gathering of trees.

Karamatsu rested (y/n) gently onto the clean sand, mindful to be gentle of her head as her longer colored hair became untied from its secure binding. His fingers deftly brushed the loose strands away from her face before his attention focused back on the multitude of wounds her body displayed.

His heart ached to see the wounded display.

"...you're..." (Y/n) stirred a little, lifting a hand up towards her head. Her colored gaze raised to his dark hues, "...I feel like I know you..."

Karamatsu wanted to acknowledge that she did know him, but fear and hatred kept his voice silent on that, "You have wounds that need to be tended to."

Her hand lowered to her injured shoulder, a grimace of pain flashing over her face as she touched the tender area, "Ah...yeah. I don't know how I'm going to get to the doctors..."

"You won't have to," He wondered why he was intervening as he raised a hand to the sharp shell he always kept tucked behind his right ear fin,

plucking it from the secure place and bringing it down between the human and himself, "I'm willing to explain, but I just need you to watch for now."

(Y/n)'s eyes focused on the shell that swept against his open palm, her lips opening in question before he pressed the fresh cut against the remains of the vicious bite mark on her shoulder.

"What the hell are you doing--?!" Her voice was cut off by a cry of pain, her body tensing as Karamatsu kept his hand against the wound. He knew what she was experiencing, knew how painful the healing process was, but remained steadfast as he felt her skin buckle and shift under his touch. He was accelerating weeks of healing into only seconds.

When Karamatsu couldn't feel anything else change under his hand, he pulled it away before scooping some cool ocean water against the blood smear.

"Wha--what did you do?" (Y/n) tried to ask as the blood washed away to reveal completely fresh skin. Not even a scar was left behind.

"My blood is...special. Consider this an apology for my little brother attacking you," The blue merman pulled away from (y/n) as she sat up in shock, her hand brushing over her shoulder multiple times while poking and prodding the skin, "I can't really rush you to the hospital like this...and I didn't want you favorite diving spot to be closed down. I'll bring you back when the rest of your wounds have been taken care of."

"This is..." She winced as her hands flew up to her head, her fingers intertwining with her hair as she sucked in a lungful of air, "Ahhh! It hurts!"

Karamatsu lowered his eyes in recognition before letting a whisper of a song breathe between his lips, urging her mind to '

relax

' and '

remember

'. If he didn't release the spell previously cast on her, (y/n) would be driven mad by the vicious cycle of her memory resurfacing and being driven back under by his song.

Her eyes went wide, locking onto his merman form, "...Karamatsu...?"

"...hello, my little minnow."

"Why...did you want me to forget...?" (Y/n) slowly lowered her hands, tears dancing on the edges of her eyes, "I thought--"

"It was safer for both of us if you forgot, (y/n)," Karamatsu watched carefully as she reached out a hand towards him, not flinching back as her fingertips brushed against his cheek, "You were but a child."

"No one would've believed me, Karamatsu! I was three!"

"I was already betrayed by an adult."

Her expression fell into understanding as her fingers pulled back, "You're not...gonna make me forget again, are you?"

"My songs don't work like that," A light laugh left his lips as they pulled into a small smile, "Even I did, you're becoming caught up in my family's problem. Seeing us so often would undo anything I sing to you."

"Your family's problem?"

Karamatsu merely pointed towards the little glass bottle still hanging around (y/n)'s neck, "That coral tethers you to my oldest brother, the one you call 'Yamano'. But the bigger issue is that I fear if you interact with anyone else in my family...you'll be killed."

"Why would your family kill me?" (Y/n)'s free hand gripped the bottle tightly, a look of uncertainty settled on her face.

"We've lost communication with our two youngest brothers...and the curse that claimed them is surely claiming the rest of us. It causes us to lose sense of who we are," The blue merman rested a hand against his chest, "(Y/n), I

don't want you near us when that happens. I won't be able to keep you safe..."

"I...I need some time to think, Karamatsu..." She shifted to partially look away from him, "I only just reunited with you, and the first thing you ask me to do is leave you again. You're the reason why I fell in love with the ocean! I can't just..."

Her voice broke as she bit back a sob, "I can't just stand by while you and your family lose yourself to this 'curse'."

"We don't know how to stop it, (y/n)."

"Then we'll find out together!" She looked back at him quickly, Karamatsu never flinching away as (y/n) moved a little closer, "I want to help you, just like you've helped me all those years ago."

"...not until you're fully healed, okay?"

"...does it really need to be your blood?" He caught the look of disgust on her expression as she completely faced him.

"It's either my blood or you get asked a lot of questions about why your wetsuit is torn to shreds and why you're not bleeding out," Karamatsu responded with a knowing smirk, watching in satisfaction as (y/n) rolled her eyes.

"Just...don't be gross about it."

"I never will be, little minnow. Now, lay down and I'll address every wound you have."

IceSkater!Karamatsu x Reader

"(Y/n)!"

My name drew my attention from the laces that my fingers had been fighting with, a neutral expression settled on my face before the bright smile of the speaker drew a wide and excited grin, "Totoko!"

I stood from the bench within the locker room, hobbling with one unshoed foot towards my close friend before wrapping my arms around her in a hug. We shared an excited laugh before she ushered me back to the bench, sitting down next to me while allowing the overstuffed gym bag to drop from her back to the ground.

"Two more weeks! Ahh!" She let out a short shout, "I'm getting the jitters already!"

"'Practice, practice, practice'," I mocked my trainer innocently, "It won't end until we step off the ice

after

the routines."

"Then we're on to the next competition," Totoko nodded in agreement as she pulled out her white ice skates, pulling out the loose lace stored within them and kicking off her sneakers. I briefly watched her before refocusing on my own skates, tightening my own laces before tying them.

With the blades safely tucked into the guards, I stood up on the padded ground and tugged on my gray long-sleeved crop top. Normally, I wouldn't wear something so revealing, but my partner had to be familiar with holding my bare back and side for the routine. The costume design left those parts of my body bare to the cold of the skating rink.

"You're the only one that thinks you're uncomfortable," Totoko spoke softly, pulling off her jacket to reveal the black string tank top clinging to her chest. I hummed in acknowledgement as I began my stretches while waiting for her to be ready, "Ice skating and all its subdivisions are rough in the costume department. Making people 'ooh' and 'aah' at outfits that have no place outside the rink or runway."

"Like the tight pleather pants Osomatsu wears?" I lifted an eyebrow in a knowing jest, catching Totoko off-guard as she let out a laugh.

"Please! We both know he stole those from Karamatsu," The blush on her cheeks could've appeared because of the cold ambient temperature within the building, but we both knew better.

We were among the few blessed to be skating partners with our boyfriends, each of us supporting the other on and off the rink.

Totoko stood up after closing her locker, flexing her knees and ankles within the skates and shaking out her arms before walking up to me. I followed her out to the large rink, the scraping sounds of metal on frozen water filling the wide open chamber while voices rose and fell with instruction.

My eyes wandered over the frozen rink aimlessly, pausing to watch pairs and soloists hammer out the final details of their various routines, some falling while others stuck their moveset. A handful of people watched from the sidelines, their thick jackets protecting them from the chill as they took in what was happening in front of them.

One of them was my trainer and coach, her left hand pressed against her lips as her brow focused on the male skater warming up on the ice in front of her. My heart fluttered as the skater's dark hair ruffled in the current he created as he spun in slow circles before tightening his form and pivoting once, twice, three times on the same point, swinging out his arms in a projection towards the invisible audience. My coach spoke, ensnaring his attention and causing him to skate closer to the thick barrier between them.

"-- try that again, Karamatsu. When (y/n)'s skating next to you, she'll be providing some cover so you can catch up to her after that triple scratch. Don't look so panicked or the judges will see it."

"Ms. Vinder," I quietly spoke her name, giving Totoko an acknowledging smile as she squeezed my arm while she continued towards her own coach.

The woman glanced over at me before fixing her eyes on the skater, "On the ice. We've got work to do."

I swallowed and licked my lips nervously, taking off my blade guards and placing them next to the pair of guards that had been laying on the bench behind Ms. Vinder. The bright blue coloration did nothing to distract the eyes from the brilliant blue sequins that had been affixed onto them.

Heading towards the open gate, I stepped onto the ice and began my warm-ups, stretching out my legs and arms while taking a wide berth around the rink's perimeter. Switching to reverse, I rubbed my hands on my thighs while keeping an eye behind me and retraining my muscles that had a day of rest.

By the time I made it around the rink, Ms. Vinder was ready for me.

"Welcome back, (y/n). Get enough rest?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"I have you both slotted for full rink access today for thirty minutes. Be aware of stragglers along the outskirts during that time."

I took in a slow breath as the man glided to a stop next to me, his hand brushing against mine, "We're doing the full routine?"

"In the meantime, I want you to focus on the double camel spin and augmented catch-cannon spins. (Y/n), keep your fingers behind the blade. Karamatsu, give her time to position for the catch."

We both nodded and sailed towards an open patch near the corner bend of the rink, his hand clasping mine as my thoughts grew worried. A scratch of

ice snared my attention as I was pulled into his arms, finally looking at the man I loved.

"There you are, butterfly," Karamatsu smiled with such a warmth that I thought he'd melt the rink, "Leave those thoughts behind on the bench. We're here on the ice and I'm yours."

"Then lead on, dancer," I returned his smile and he tapped the tip of my nose with a finger. With little instruction, he began to guide me into the second part of the routine where the music had slowed to a ballad and after my character had 'collapsed' into his arms.

"One, two," He counted before I switched from skating with him to facing him, Karamatsu's momentum pushing me backwards as his hand firmly clasped around my right wrist, my fingers holding tight to his own wrist. We acted out the small theatrics before I lifted my right leg off the ice and held it at quarter height, Karamatsu dragging me for a moment before adjusting into a wide stance circle, my right hand holding onto the back of his neck while he spread out his arms to the side. With a flourish, his hands were on my hips before one hand slid up my arm as he changed his direction completely, causing us to spin around each other.

"And kick," Karamatsu spoke rhythmically as we both swung out our right legs in front of ourselves, the position forcing us to face opposite directions as our hands planted themselves on each other's back and hooking around the extended knee. When I was certain he had me firmly, I let my right hand fall behind me as I 'lay' next to him, the ceiling spinning in my vision.

"Three, four," I felt Karamatsu's voice rumble in his chest as he continued the count, my hand releasing his leg as he squatted within the turn while my own bent back. My free hand clasped at the back of the skate, pulling my body into an augmented catch spin before Karamatsu's lowered position lifted my raised leg higher, both of us spinning slightly faster in the tighter form. After four turns, Karamatsu flashed me a smirk and stood up, lifting me up before his arms rolled me close to his head. I let out a surprised yelp, laughing as he planted his lips on my bare skin and blew into it hard.

The reverberating flatulent noise caused both of us to laugh as his toe ground us to a stop, gently setting me down on the ice before kissing my forehead.

"What was that for?!" I pressed the back of my hand to my lips, embarrassed yet flattered that he had enough confidence to do such a thing.

"Because I wanted to," His answer drew another laugh from me, a raucous cheer of laughter, hollers, and whistles from a certain pair of skaters on the other side of the rink. Karamatsu winked at me before looking over at his older brother and Totoko, lifting a hand as if thanking them for the approval.

"You're an absolute goof," I squeezed his hand in appreciation, knowing that something must've shown on my face that he didn't approve of, performing such an act to knock me off-balance.

Ms. Vinder had us perform specific moves within the routine over and over, allowing us a small break while she met with the school manager to update him on our progress.

Karamatsu pulled me into the seat next to him, quickly pressing his lips against my cold cheek, "You did wonderful, (y/n)."

I blushed as I took a swing of water from my bottle, offering him some while I caught my breath, "I'm trying."

"You must be cold in that," He spoke, handing the bottle back to me while reaching behind him and pulling out his favorite blue hoodie, "Wrap this around you."

"Thanks," I wrapped the sleeves around my exposed midriff, feeling the warmth flood my nerves, "You make the whole routine seem effortless."

"You're the beauty, I'm the brawn," Karamatsu leaned in and gently kissed my lips, "You're the one that has to practically perform theater for the judges."

"So do you," I kissed him back softly, resting my forehead against his while he pulled my legs over his lap, his strong hands calmly massaging my thighs and calves while we rested, "I think you're more excited for your costume, though."

"Your red bejeweled dress suit will catch more eyes than mine."

"Speak for yourself, sir," I huffed with a smile, "Black pants that are tight in

just

the right places, opaque fabric clinging to your arms while flaunting your sides."

Karamatsu barely hid the shy expression as a blush flooded his cheeks.

"You'll be the daydream of every single woman we skate in front of."

"I'm sure you'll taunt the nightmares of the men," His voice lowered, husky and growling, "I'm the only one that gets to dream of you."

"Oh, please," I poked his cheek while the dominating attempt completely fell away from his face as a teasing smile replaced it, "If you play your cards right, I may or may not 'appropriate' my costume for your eyes in the bedroom."

I didn't miss the predatory look that flashed in his eyes, Karamatsu immediately tearing his gaze from me to look at the rink, "You're dangerous, (y/n)."

"Only to you," The water bottle lifted to my lips in victory, downing another gulp while his fingers continued their work.

Once our coach came back, we returned to the ice. Karamatsu and I perfected the smaller moments, already having worked out the larger movesets under Ms. Vinder's critical eye.

My body was warm enough that the cold no longer bothered me, a thin layer of sweat beading as the chill temperature tried to wick it away as

quickly as it formed. Karamatsu had the same sheen on his skin, his grip never faltering on my body as I was pulled, pushed, and lifted through our practice.

Then came our rink time. A short 5-minute refresher break was in order as students of the school cleared the ice, some staying close to the edge to continue practicing while we provided entertainment for those taking a breather.

Ms. Vinder called out the mock announcement after we had done our flourish entrances, my heart pounding as she spoke our full names and what school we represented. Cheers resounded from the students on and off the ice, my nerves spiking while my eyes locked with Karamatsu's almost twenty feet away from me.

He saw my worry, only able to offer a stern look that shot through my heart. Karamatsu had yet to drop me or let me fall; he would

never

let me fall while I was in his hands.

I urged his confidence to flood my senses, a focused expression falling over my face as the music began. We each counted in our heads until the right timing, dancing across the ice in the same direction while turning closer to each other. The first phase of the routine was eventless, both of us stilling while the staccato of the violins shifted into a tango, our minds snapping out instructions for our bodies to follow. The second phase went perfectly despite my crop top flying above the sports bra I used to keep my breasts close to my body, Karamatsu letting out a deep roll of laughter as he held me.

The music quieted as the second male voice sang out the verse, both Karamatsu and I continuing our routine with him supporting me.

Violins swelled as the song picked up in intensity, Karamatsu's hand releasing mine to allow both of us freedom as we prepared for the side-by-

side upright triple spin. Momentum carried us both as Karamatsu dropped back behind me, my body and his turning at the same time.

One spin.

Two spins.

I cried out as I felt a twinge in my left knee, falling to the ice as pain lanced up my thigh and into my hip. My hands failed to keep me upright as my head bounced on the ice, sliding to a stop against the thick barrier wall. Yells of shock and surprise sounded out as Karamatsu skidded into the wall next to me, his knees taking the brunt of the damage as he quickly held my upper body close to his chest.

"(Y/n)!" His breathing was erratic, worry creasing his features as the music continued for a moment more before stopping, "I'm right here, baby."

"Are you okay, (y/n)?" Ms. Vinder stepped onto the ice, kneeling down next to me when she got close. The jacket she had been wearing was now wrapped around me, "Do you know where you are?"

"Yeah..." I mumbled, listening to Karamatsu's panicked heartbeat while I breathed. Going through my mental checklist of body function, I worked through what had happened, "My left knee gave out, coach."

She nodded before placing her hands on the mentioned limb, stretching it out before I whimpered in pain when it was nearly fully extended, "Damn...damn...Karamatsu, bring her to the bench."

He gladly carried me off the ice, setting me down gently on the seats that we had used during our breaks. His apologies were littered with kisses as I rubbed my head where it hit the rink, Osomatsu and Totoko rushing over from their seats.

"You okay, princess?" Osomatsu asked gently, my nickname falling from his lips in worry.

"I'll recover," I avoided nodding for the moment, the throbbing in my head growing more calm by the minute.

"Ms. Vinder didn't look happy," Totoko commented as she handed me my water bottle, sitting next to me as Karamatsu's hand gently massaged my left thigh.

"I fucked up our chance," Tears bubbled along the corners of my eyes, realization hitting me harder than I hit the ice, "Karamatsu...I'm sorry."

"It's okay. The actual competition meant very little to me," He tried to sound reassuring, "We'll let you recover, get you back to full strength, and try the next one."

"Says the one with four medals under his belt," huffed Osomatsu, nudging his younger brother with a smirk. Totoko's hand quickly shot out and slapped his shoulder, drawing a confused look to his face before her eyes darted to me, "Oh...but it would've been your first. Sorry, (y/n)."

I lowered my head, "I know you didn't mean it as a jab."

My brow furrowed with frustration. This

would've

been my first team competition, something that Karamatsu had suggested since we only skated in single brackets. I was excited for this, meticulously stretching properly since our coach agreed to the team, ensuring that I got enough rest every day, and stuck with a schedule that was constricting.

"(Y/n)," My name fell in a defeated tone as Ms. Vinder came back to the rink, "The nurse is here to help you to his office. Would you like help standing up?"

I pulled my leg from Karamatsu's grip and set my face as neutral as I could, "I think I can manage that."

With little prompting, I stood on my own feet as I gingerly made my way towards the awaiting nurse who held a wheelchair firmly in front of him

that was meant to serve as transportation into the unguarded floors while I had my skates on. He said nothing as I lowered myself into the wheelchair, my eyes lingering on Karamatsu before I was forcefully turned away.

Ms. Vinder took a deep breath and faced the remaining three students under her instruction, "I've been told to replace (y/n) in the ice dance routine."

"What?!" Karamatsu nearly yelled out, standing up from his seat in an instant.

"Karamatsu," She spoke his name like a command, "The manager's word is final and you're one of our top skaters. He wants you to continue as the male skater while Totoko takes (y/n)'s position."

Totoko's voice became stuck in her throat, her eyes wide as she looked between Osomatsu and Karamatsu.

"And (y/n)?" Osomatsu's eyes lowered into a glare, his frustrations obvious.

"She'll be regulated to physical therapy until she's cleared to return to the ice. A knee injury at this stage removes any chance she has at participating in this competition," Ms. Vinder sighed, her face displaying her own distaste for the decision made by people above her, "Osomatsu, you'll be pushed into the single brackets until (y/n) is cleared. You'll be a team to perform in the Grand Prix next season."

The oldest brother huffed his disgust, his arms folding across his chest as his dark eyes looked at Karamatsu. The second oldest sextuplet was

fuming

, the quiet fury held behind his dark gaze targeting no one as he looked towards the ice.

"I'm...I'm sorry, Karamatsu," Totoko spoke up quietly, placing her hand on Osomatsu's arm for a moment before stepping in front of the second oldest, "Let's head to the mats so you can teach me what I need to do."

None of the three skaters liked the decision, but they couldn't fight against it.

Karamatsu wordlessly picked up his things, including the guards for (y/n)'s skates, and headed to the locker room. Totoko followed him with her head bowed, fully knowing that it would be a long day for all of them. Osomatsu scratched at the back of his head before he grabbed his and Totoko's things, following them to the locker room with the same intention to change from blades to sneakers.

I sat in the audience seats as I watched Karamatsu and Totoko skate together, both of them performing the routine that we had spent weeks of sleepless nights ironing out. A large plastic brace clamped around my thigh and calf, securing my knee so that the ligaments that had been pulled could heal. The gaudy thing was a constant reminder to me, hurting my heart whenever Karamatsu's gaze often wandered to it before he'd give a gentle smile like he was trying to tell me everything would be okay.

Totoko had come to me crying the day after the injury, profusely apologizing about what she had to do with Karamatsu and that the heavily sexual moves had no meaning behind them when she performed. I offered her my sympathy for the nature of the ice dance, knowing that Karamatsu had been the one to pick the song and come up with some of the movesets.

I had teased him about it in the bedroom when I found out.

The daily practices had driven the embarrassing positions into my head as 'normal', my cheeks flushing as I watched my boyfriend perform the same positions with my best friend.

"I wonder if she'll do that to me," Osomatsu thought out loud next to me, his attire warm and comfortable as he had finished his singles routine an hour ago, "Looks fun."

"You can ask Karamatsu how to do those lifts," I tried to laugh, leaning back into my seat.

"He'll never teach me those."

"Doesn't want competition between you two?"

"They were meant for you."

I could only hum as I dipped my head in acknowledgement, knowing he spoke the truth.

Ms. Vinder was drilling both skaters twice as hard the week leading up to the competition, her voice not quite carrying to where we sat. I could tell that she was vexed by the expressions Totoko wore, her having to act out like she was truly in love with Karamatsu.

I held nothing against Totoko.

"How many more days?"

"The brace? Two. Then it's back to PT and light skate exercises."

"Give me a call when you get the clearance," Osomatsu leaned towards me, bumping shoulders before sitting forward, "I'll help you on the ice."

"Well, I'd hope so. You're my future teammate."

"Butterfly," Karamatsu's lips pressed against my own as I accompanied him to the ready room of the arena. I kissed him back gently, feeling his hands cup my cheeks, "You didn't have to follow me here."

"I know, but I wanted to. I may not have the best seat in the house, but I'll be close to you."

His eyes switched between mine, uncertainty flickering in them before he offered a smile as he lowered his hands, "Are you still up for dinner afterwards?"

"Only if Coach will let you," I stuck out my tongue playfully.

"I'm sure she will," A new voice entered the conversation, drawing my attention to Totoko as she wore a modified version of my costume, "We'll ace this thing and then hang out back at the rink."

"Maybe you'll skate with us this time?" Osomatsu leaned past Karamatsu's shoulder, looking right at me.

Words faltered on my tongue. I had been cleared to skate a few days ago, already back on the ice to strengthen my knee while refraining from routines. I looked into Karamatsu's dark eyes, feeling his confidence ebb into me, "Yeah, I'll give it a try."

The assurance spread through the four of us, giving Karamatsu life as he kissed me once more before he and Totoko had to leave for the rink, "Skate with me. I won't let you fall."

"You never will."

Their performance was breathtaking, driving the audience wild with the sensual moves and close contact between my boyfriend and best friend. My hand clenched around Osomatsu's as we both watched on, the dance between our lovers captivating.

My heart ached to be the one skating with Karamatsu, to be the one that he focused on.

"It's okay," Osomatsu whispered against my ear, "I'm nervous, too."

I gave him a sympathetic look, realizing that I wasn't the only one desiring it.

The crowd erupted into cheers as the song ended, some people throwing flowers onto the ice while the judges focused on scoring every aspect of the performance. Karamatsu and Totoko had given their thanks to the audience before they stepped off the ice, my best friend rushing to Osomatsu and kissing him deeply while Karamatsu overpowered me in a hug. His muscles shuddered at my touch, a telltale sign that he was exhausted.

We waited on the sidelines while the judges calculated the scores, unleashing a torrent of sound when they announced Karamatsu and Totoko in second place. We joined the cheering as Ms. Vinder hugged the two skaters tightly, nearly shouting her congratulations over the noise.

My fingers fumbled with the laces on my skates, tying them up and tucking the loose ends behind the tongue. Totoko had already gone ahead to the rink, wanting to 'stress skate' and aimlessly do whatever she wanted without having a teacher tell her what to do. I donned my skating jacket and prepared to walk out to the rink before Osomatsu intercepted me, surprising me with a small bag.

"Glad I caught you, princess. I'm under orders to not let you out of this locker room until you wear this," He puffed out his chest as he pressed the bag into my stomach, his athletic frame blocking me from leaving.

"What?" I scoffed, looking down at the bag to see a glint of red, "Who told you that?"

"Totoko," His dark eyes flashed with amusement, "...and Karamatsu."

I merely blinked at him before taking the bag and pulling out whatever was inside it.

In my hand draped the red sequin-encrusted dress costume that was tailored for me to wear in the ice dance with Karamatsu. My eyes widened as I looked back at Osomatsu, staring at him for a moment before shaking my head slightly.

"I...don't think I can do that."

"You can," Osomatsu encouraged, taking a step closer to me and gently pushing my hands to my chest, "I've seen you accurately land triple axles since you've been cleared."

"But that's just jumps! I don't know if I can dance!"

"Well, you better make up your mind quickly. My brother's freezing his ass off waiting for you."

A flustered blush rose in my cheeks as I looked between him and the costume, only whimpering once before ripping off my own jacket.

The entire arena was empty, save for two people sitting front row to the rink and one solitary skater pacing around the perimeter. Powerful lights had been switched on so that every inch of the rink was illuminated, leaving the audience in darkness.

Totoko cheered as I stepped onto the ice, wearing the beautiful red dress that clung to my slim frame while my hair had been pulled up and twisted into a bun, pinned down in such a way that would make our coach faint.

But I didn't care.

Karamatsu smiled broadly as he approached me, wearing the black costume that hugged him

very

nicely, taking my left hand and escorting me into the middle of the rink, "You changed into it."

"I want this dance, Karamatsu. Do me the honors?"

"I will gladly give it," He leaned down and offered a light kiss against my lips.

"Representing Akatsuka Skating School, (y/n) (l/n) and Karamatsu Matsuno!" Osomatsu shouted from his seat, clicking a remote after Karamatsu and I got into our positions.

Violins played their short notes, urging us to move.

The musical introduction was easy, Karamatsu's hands were steady as he guided me through the first phase and into the second phase. The music flowed through us as I focused on my boyfriend, his eyes steady while he

mouthed the lyrics like he was singing them to me. The third phase snuck up on me, the music becoming soft as Karamatsu and I danced as lovers.

A flash of worry passed through my eyes as I realized the next move, Karamatsu gently nodding his encouragement before he guided my hands to his neck then stretching his arms out, pulling me along before sliding to skate by my side only to surge forward and face me again. His hands cupped my face in assurance while I laughed, slowing down just a little as he turned his side to me, his legs spread wide and his right hand held out in expectation.

I lifted my right leg up, his hand gripping my ankle tightly as he planted my blade into the joint of his waist to ensure that I wouldn't slip. Taking another 'step' forward, I used his leg as a platform while his hands kept my right leg rooted while I lifted my left leg over his hand and down onto his left leg. I could feel his hands gripping my thighs tightly as he leaned back just enough to send us into a curve, my hands and arms dramatically reaching up to the sky as I leaned forward to be Karamatsu's counterweight.

With a spinning flourish, I dropped from his legs as his hands caught me securely before placing me on the ice. The choreography that followed was simple enough, my lips stretched wide in a smile as the music swelled for the finale. Karamatsu's grip was steady as he lifted me into a short corkscrew spin, grabbing my waist tightly and lifting me further up while I lay 'lifeless' in his arms. The world was spinning as I was set back down to the ice, my mind on autopilot as I continued to act dead while Karamatsu held me close at a complete stop.

The music ended while Totoko and Osomatsu yelled and screamed their approval, Karamatsu pulling me up from my draped position and into a tight hug. I could feel his heart beat wildly against my chest, his breath ragged as his body fought against exhaustion.

"That's my butterfly!" He shouted as we hugged, his voice reverberating in the arena. I could only give a shuddering laugh as tears of joy started to stream down my face, "That's my (y/n)."

"That was perfect!" I heard Totoko cry out before she pulled me into a hug, her skates carrying us for a little bit before stopping, "I'm so proud of you!"

I stuttered my thanks as I wiped the tears away, looking back to see Osomatsu and Karamatsu exchanging congratulations. Words of praise were swapped, plans to retire for the day were made, and soon I found myself sitting in the arena's front lobby with my sneakers and knee brace equipped.

Osomatsu and Totoko had left to rest and prepare for tomorrow, leaving me to wait for Karamatsu alone. The sound of footsteps announced his arrival as I stood up, shouldering my skating bag with a smile.

"You have no idea what you've done to me," Karamatsu's voice was low as he approached, his lips crashing against mine while his hands pressed my hips into his, "Did you...'appropriate' it?"

"I did," The kiss left me breathless, barely dipping my head towards my bag, "Coach won't need it anymore."

"Good."

Without another word, Karamatsu led me out of the skating school's ice arena and towards my apartment.

*(Below is the choreography I based the performance on. Scott Moir has *huge* Karamatsu energy in this video, so I do suggest you continue to watch after their performance.*

It is quite endearing to see.)

https://youtu.be/wOEKdWrtz6U

--Mature-- Alpha!Karamatsu x Omega!Reader

WARNING! This is a mature chapter, and meant for an 18+ audience. If you're younger than that, I respectfully ask you find something else to read.

If you're older than 18, you may continue at your own discretion.

This story contains mentions of sexual scenes and rape (male to female), and gore/violence.

The morning sun stirred him from sleep, slowly opening his eyes to see his mate's bare back facing him. The slim curves of her shoulder leading to her side and traveling further down to her hips stirred a heat in his loins, but he pushed it aside as he scooched closer to her, reaching out a hand to trace every mark he had left on her exposed skin.

A light moan from her lips let him know that she was waking up, his hand shifting from the bite and scratch marks to wrap just under her breasts and drag her closer to him, settling his chin against the crook of her neck as he took in a deep breath through his nose. She pressed back into him, holding onto his forearm with small hands. Her usual scent of lavender mixed with apple and mint was overpowered by his own ginger-and-orange scent.

Noticing a patch of raised skin with an oval of healing scabs on her shoulder, he turned his head and gave it a light lick, partially smiling in satisfaction when she flinched and softly moaned.

"Good morning, (y/n)," He pulled her ever closer, feeling their naked bodies flush together under the single sheet covering the entire bed.

"...morning, Karamatsu..." (Y/n)'s voice sounded groggy, "Don't tell me that you're still--"

"No, I've more than satisfied

that

need for now," He nuzzled against her neck again, planting a gentle kiss on the goosebumped skin, "Though, I'm not going to stop you if

you

want more."

"No..." She almost laughed, "I need my legs to help me walk today."

"Really?" Karamatsu raised an eyebrow, "Just call off work."

"I did," (Y/n) shifted in his arms, turning to face him fully as he relaxed his hold, "We still need to eat and I'd rather get what I need from the store than order delivery

again

."

"Hmm, then I give you leave to go and gather what you need," Karamatsu released her from his hold with a flourish, throwing back the sheet and exposing both of their bodies to the cold air of his apartment. (Y/n) cried out in surprise as she clamped her arms over her bare breasts, throwing a few light punches at Karamatsu's broad chest before rolling out of bed.

"Want to come with?" She offered as she slipped on a fresh pair of undergarments, looking back at him as she moved to his closet. Karamatsu gave it some thought before remembering that it was his turn to clean up the apartment, knowing that it would be a nice surprise for (y/n) to come back to an organized and clean place.

He shook his head in response, stretching his upper body as he shifted into a sitting position, his legs over the edge with his feet firmly planted on the floor.

Pulling out a nice floor-length summer dress, (y/n) filled out the fabric nicely and struggled to zip up the back, the zipper laying in a spot she couldn't reach. An exasperated frown turned the corners of her lips down as she turned to Karamatsu.

He stood up with a knowing smile and finished the job for her, wrapping his arms around her waist as he leaned over her small frame to rest his chin on her shoulder, "Take your time, okay? I have a surprise planned."

"Okay," (Y/n) smiled and kissed his cheek, "I can't wait to see the surprise."

Standing back up and freeing her from his hold once more, Karamatsu escorted her to the front hall after donning a blue pair of boxer briefs. With a wave, she stated that she'd be back just before lunch and she'd need help carrying the groceries in, closing the door behind her and leaving Karamatsu alone in the apartment.

Taking a deep breath, he glanced around the living room and kitchen area, noticing that there was still a small pile of dishes that hadn't been cleaned yet. After a quick change of clothing, Karamatsu rolled up his proverbial sleeves and began cleaning.

It wasn't until he finished that he looked up at the wall clock hanging over the living room couch, noticing that the time was past two o'clock in the afternoon. A sinking feeling quickly swelled in his gut as he gathered up the garbage, grabbing his phone and keys before hauling the bags out to the trash pile. Karamatsu's face lost all traces of the happy smile he previously had, knowing that (y/n) was

never

late without notifying him of her change of plans.

Taking long strides from the apartment building, he rounded the corner with a readiness to bolt to the marketplace and almost walked into (y/n), staggering back so he didn't knock her over while she huffed out a surprised whine.

Her throat sounded a lot rougher than it did that morning.

"(Y/n)!" Surprise filled his voice before worry settled in his throat, "There you are...I was starting to get worried."

"Kara..." (Y/n) looked worn out, her eyes tired and slightly puffy with a light coloring of red mixed in. Taking in a breath, she gave him a faltering yet soft smile, "The store was having a much bigger sale than I realized. Too many people there."

"Here, let me get those for you," Karamatsu scooped up some of the heavy paper bags in one arm, walking between her and the street as he moved her free hand into the crook of his left elbow, "You could've given me a call if there were too many people. I know how you get around large crowds."

"Oh, it wasn't..." She hung her head low, "I wasn't able to get some of the ingredients I had wanted, but we have enough for other meals."

Karamatsu didn't miss the light trembling of her hand.

"(Y/n)...?"

"Hmm?" (Y/n) looked back up at him.

"...you're shaking."

"Ah, am I?" She glanced towards her hand on his arm, a neutral look covering her face.

"Take a bath when you get home, okay?" Karamatsu adjusted the bags on his arm, "Lunch can be delivered if you're that tired."

"...okay."

Walking slowly back to the apartment, Karamatsu unlocked the door and let (y/n) walk in first before following her in and closing the door behind them, a strange scent following her every step. His ears perked up when he heard her quickly put her grocery bag down on the counter and rush towards his bedroom, barely looking over in time to catch her form darting down the

hall. Kicking off his shoes and setting the bags down, Karamatsu began to unpack the groceries when his nose picked up the same strange scent from one of the bags.

Completely emptying the bag, he gave each one of the contents in the bag a small sniff before smelling the bag itself. The bag smelled like cinnamon and fresh cloves, the scent thick and heavy...similar to his own scent when he was mating with and claiming (y/n).

Karamatsu smothered the rolling growl within his chest as his teeth clenched tightly, a snarl barely pulling at his upper lip.

The bathroom door closed before he heard the water running to fill the large bathtub, using her absence to walk into his bedroom and following the faint intrusive trail until his eyes landed on the corner next to her laundry basket.

The dress was tightly wadded up into a ball, smothering the foreign scent until Karamatsu got closer. His heart began to race as he felt an unexplainable urge threaten to take over his control, his very being anxious of the faint scent that had penetrated her clothes. Holding the wadded dress ball in his hands, he hesitantly peeled it open as the scent grew stronger until he pinpointed the sources: her panties that were sliced on one side, cut clean with some kind of blade, and the zipper on the back of her dress with some kind of dried liquid starting to crust along the length of the mechanism.

Another growl burst from his chest into his throat as Karamatsu felt his eyes widen and constrict, his canine fangs partially protruding as he threw down the soiled clothes and charged towards the bathroom. Breaking the meager handle lock that (y/n) had tried to use for privacy, Karamatsu could only stare in shock at her naked form in the bath, her arms clamped down over her breasts and abdomen as she tried to keep her back hidden from him, pressing it against the tiled wall next to the tub.

The cinnamon and fresh clove scent smothered her own completely.

"Who."

"Ka-"

"WHO?!" He shouted, no longer holding back his anger as his eyes took in the full extent of damage on his mate's body: the bite marks on her shoulders and chest, the scratches etched down her sides and legs...

the fresh, ugly, bleeding bite on her skin that ripped his own claim off her body

.

"I don't know!" (Y/n) shouted back, her voice shaking in fear as he drew closer to her, pushing herself away from him as far as the tub would allow. A whine tore from her throat as he instantly knelt down next to the tub and brought her into a tight hug, her bare skin trembling and shuddering at the contact.

"Shh..." Karamatsu muttered to both his inner beast and the terrified mate in his arms, "I'm not going to hurt you, (y/n)...I never will."

"I'm sorry...! I'm so sorry--" The tightness in her voice hurt Karamatsu to hear, "I tried to stop them..."

"Shh, shh...I know..." He wrestled control from the knot of anger rising in his throat, his voice taking on a softer tone, "May I see the rest?"

He felt her hesitantly nod against his shoulder before he gently released her, seeing (y/n) turn her back to him. The inner beast raged, urging Karamatsu to take her right that second, to claim her once more and mark her in the tub, but he kept the fury quiet as he studied the scratches and bites that traveled from her shoulders down her back before pooling near her waist. His nose picked up a second scent, faint underneath the overpowering cinnamon one. The cinnamon scent was definitely from the person that tried to remove Karamatsu's mark, but they weren't the only guilty party.

"You're not mad at me...are you?" (Y/n) barely looked over her shoulder at him, her frame trembling underneath his hands.

"Not at all," He quickly gave her a kiss on the cheek, nuzzling her neck from behind before pulling away when he felt her flinch from the nuzzle. His brow partially furrowed at the reaction, concluding that the offender had done something similar to her, "Do you remember what they looked like?"

"No...there wasn't anything distinctive about them," (Y/n) turned back around under his hands, Karamatsu shifting them up to her shoulders to avoid touching the sensitive areas. He felt her heart start to calm down from its frantic pace when he first barged into the bathroom, a smile crossing his lips.

"All right. I'm going to put groceries away and then order some lunch. Take as long as you need..." He stood up and moved to leave the bathroom before looking back towards her, "Want me to get rid of those clothes?"

A sorrowful look crossed her face before she gave him a slow nod, sinking back into the water as she watched him close the busted door behind him.

The anger returned tenfold as Karamatsu stalked towards the clothes in the corner, his nose pushing past the cinnamon scent to pick up a chamomile or catnip scent. The second scent fluctuated between the two smells. Grabbing a trash bag, Karamatsu roughly shoved the clothing in and tied it tightly, throwing it down the stairs into the trash heap before rubbing his shoulder against the door jam of his apartment, marking his agitation to the other Alphas and warning them to stay the hell away from his apartment.

Wiping down every grocery item that he unpacked, he removed the cinnamon scent and threw the paper grocery bags into the burnable trash pile.

Placing their usual oden order, Karamatsu heard the tub drain as he hung up the phone. As much as he wanted to smother (y/n) in his scent and drown her in his affection to overwrite what she had experienced from the

other

, Karamatsu needed to obey his Omega's needs right now. If she wanted to be left alone, he would do so without complaint.

He silently watched as she opened the bathroom door, wrapped in his extra large towel and disappeared into his bedroom without a look behind her, the sound of a dresser drawer being pulled open. Slight annoyance crossed his face at the thought of washing the stink of the other male off his towel, but it was quickly squashed when he detected his own shampoo and bodywash from the hallway.

(Y/n) wanted the smell off of her just as much as he did.

When she re-emerged from the bedroom wearing his own white t-shirt and blue jumpsuit with the sleeves tied around her waist, he knew he had his answer. Karamatsu moved from the living room to the hallway, scooping her up in his arms and walking them over the couch, no longer smelling anything other than himself on her form. (Y/n) pressed herself into him as he settled down on the couch, her damp head resting against his right shoulder while her knees hung over his crossed left leg.

She wasn't small by any means but his testosterone had given him a large frame, easily standing a few heads higher than the average Beta human.

"Oden is on its way," He rested his right cheek against the top of her head, "Want to watch something?"

"Mmhmm..." She muttered her favorite show and Karamatsu pulled it up on the television without a word of complaint.

The rest of the day passed quickly, (y/n) barely leaving his side and Karamatsu giving her reaffirming kisses and nuzzles when she wanted them. They had delivery for dinner, too, as neither of them were in the mood to cook anymore.

When (y/n) fell asleep next to Karamatsu after the slow yet passionate sex session, his eyes narrowed in determination before placing a light kiss on her shoulder, right over where he re-marked her as his mate. Sliding carefully out of the bed, he pulled on his usual clothes: a slim pair of jeans

that were partially bejeweled, a belt with a skull buckle to keep the pants held up, a white tank top, and his old leather jacket with a partially faded white skull printed onto its back. Giving his sleeping (y/n) one more kiss, he quietly left the apartment and locked the door behind him before pulling out his cellphone, dialing up one of the few contacts registered in the digital phonebook.

"Yo."

Karamatsu could hear the loud parlor noises beyond the microphone of the phone, giving a silent sigh before speaking.

"I'd ask 'where are you' but you're playing pachinko, aren't you?"

"Yeah, I was having a pretty good streak before you called," The smugness of the speaker's voice gave him a small smile, "You jealous?"

"I need your help."

The speaker paused for a moment, "You

rarely

ask for that. What's got you spooked?"

"Some cocky Alpha," Karamatsu didn't hide the growl in his voice, feeling his inner beast claw back up from the cage it was forced into earlier.

"Fuck...damn..." The parlor sounds grew distant, "All right, I'm all ears."

Karamatsu had to reel himself back from attacking his oldest brother when they met up, the scent of cinnamon with a hint of clove and nutmeg being

too

close to the offending scent. Osomatsu had defended himself with an alibi that he was at their parents home for most of the day, only leaving after

dinner for pachinko. Karamatsu explained what had happened, watching Osomatsu intently as the other Alpha became visibly agitated while he remained silent as the younger brother continued speaking, divulging his plan of wandering the Alpha hotspots to see if they could find a trail to follow.

Both men remained silent as the older gathered himself, the vicious snarl morphing into a sneer while the hatred loomed deep within his dark hues, "Hell yeah, I'll walk with you. If we find him, you can tag me in when you get too tired."

Both Alphas headed towards the building that housed the grocery store, not finding any remaining scent trails at the presumed crime scene. The search paused after a few hours when Osomatsu wanted to stop at a late night store for something to drink, Karamatsu accompanying him inside and browsing the store's inventory for something to satisfy his own thirst. He spotted (y/n)'s favorite drink, picking up two of them so she could have a treat when she woke up, a soft smile on his face as he imagined the scene.

"Finding everything you need?" Someone called out from the counter. Karamatsu looked over to verify that he was the one being asked, meeting the store clerk's eyes and nodding.

"Yeah, just need something else," He reached back into the drink cooler for his own drink and walked towards the counter, setting the drinks down and reaching for his wallet.

"Will this be all for you?" The clerk asked the routine question as he reached across the counter and started to scan the drinks.

Karamatsu froze as a familiar scent wafted from the clerk's exposed arm.

Chamomile

.

"Yeah, that'll be it for me," He tried to wrest control from his anger. This could be an innocent person, for all he knew.

"Hey, add this on," Osomatsu quickly put down his two cans of pop after nudging Karamatsu to the side, pulling out his wallet while glancing towards Karamatsu, "I got this."

With the quick nod Osomatsu gave, Karamatsu knew the words were directed at him. The older Alpha had felt the emotional spike and took control before Karamatsu had a chance to lose it.

"Thanks..." The younger brother muttered before taking a few steps back, waiting patiently as Osomatsu opened up his wallet.

"It sure was a hot one today!" The eldest sighed out, setting down some bills before the total was called out, "Man, that lunch time rush must've been

brutal

for you."

"Oh, I wasn't here," The clerk responded, scanning each item, "But I heard it was pretty harsh."

"You weren't? What were you doing, if you don't mind my asking?" Osomatsu leaned forward against the counter, resting his head on his left hand.

"Just...helping out a friend with a favor."

Karamatsu kept himself from glaring at the clerk, his hands clenched into fists.

"Oh, that's nice of you," The eldest laughed a little, "Didn't have anything to do yourself, huh?"

"No, I had my own stuff I needed to do, but he needed a hand with something real quick," The clerk gave a nervous smile before bagging up the drinks, "He said he had a bit of a girl problem."

"A problem, huh? What...did his crush turn him down?" Osomatsu pried, ignoring the bag that the clerk put in front of him.

"Kinda? I don't know. He didn't tell me much about it, only that it'd be easier for him with me around," The young man rubbed his upper arm before tending to the cashier with Osomatsu's payment, "You know how girls can be...they want an audience so they feel safer when they turn down a guy that crushes on them."

"No way!" Osomatsu gasped like he'd just been told one of the greatest secrets of the universe, "So you helped a guy out! Just like a good wingman should."

"Yeah, like a good friend would," The clerk nodded, "It was kinda embarrassing afterwards, though..."

"They didn't start making out in front of you, did they?" Osomatsu leaned back from the counter, both of his hands holding on the lip. Karamatsu noticed that his knuckles were just as white as his own.

"Kinda? He asked her for a kiss since she turned him down, and when she pecked him on the cheek," A blush lit up his face, "He said he heard her say that she wanted him quietly and they started going at it."

A loud '

CRACK

' resounded through the store, startling the clerk from the world of his memories to look down at Osomatsu's hands, the fiberboard of the counter top splintered underneath his grip. Karamatsu's rage overpowered the intensity of Osomatsu's anger but the clerk didn't flinch back from them, drawing both Alphas attention to the small detail.

The clerk was a

Beta.

"Ah, shit," The clerk rushed to grab a towel from the back, "Are you okay?"

Osomatsu didn't answer, reaching over the counter to grab a fistful of shirt fabric when the clerk was close enough and pulling him over the counter, shoving the Beta towards Karamatsu without looking.

"Where's your friend?" Karamatsu growled in fury as the clerk entered his reach, grabbing the young man by his shirt and lifting him up a little off the floor, towering to his full height.

"Shit, shit...!" Fear made the chamomile scent grow stronger, "She was already claimed?! Fuck!"

"I'd say the name before anything else," Osomatsu called out as he grabbed the bag, eyeing the tray holding his money near the register.

"F-Fuyuki...! Fuyuki Hiroji!" The Beta wailed in fear, his feet dangling above the floor, "He works the last shift at a bar nearby! Th-The Iron Stallion!"

"Tell him we're coming and you'll share in his misery," Karamatsu dropped him to the ground, stalking out of the store before walking towards the well-known skeevy bar. Osomatsu thanked the clerk with a cheerful voice, following Karamatsu out and walking behind him silently.

"You're not gonna stop me?"

"Nah, not at this point," Osomatsu shrugged as he opened one of his drinks, swallowing most of the liquid in a few gulps, "If you go too far, I'll stop you...but that's about it."

The Iron Stallion was a large Alpha-only bar, with a few bartenders juggling the customer's orders and a handful of bouncers to make sure that the crowd stayed tame. Sometimes testosterone ran high and a fight broke out among the crowd, but everyone knew the rules: you start a fight, you get thrown out and are never let back in.

The banned list was short.

"Go to the alley. You'll cause a ruckus if you walk in now," Osomatsu shoved the drink bag into Karamatsu's hand, tossing the open can over as well, "I'll send the correct guy your way. Cinnamon, right?"

"Yeah..." Karamatsu sneered, knowing that Osomatsu was correct.

The wait wasn't long.

"So, you've come back for more,

songbird

?" An Alpha male smelling strongly of cinnamon and fresh cloves swaggered out from the back door, drawing Karamatsu's full attention as the male laughed a little after uttering the disgusting nickname, "I told you that you'd be beg--"

Fuyuki didn't get to finish the sentence as Karamatsu's fist collided with his jaw, taking a few staggered steps before falling to his left side, swearing and sputtering. Karamatsu was on top of him, pinning Fuyuki to the ground and unleashing a flurry of blows that targeted his head and chest. Fuyuki used the slim reaction time to put his arms up in front of his face, blocking most of the punches that Karamatsu dealt out.

Karamatsu saw a small opening near the guy's chin and took it, recoiling back as his curled fist was met with fangs, Fuyuki biting down and grabbing a mouthful of flesh. Snarling, Karamatsu opened his other fist and gouged long claw marks into Fuyuki's left forearm, forcing it to move away from its protective position. The left arm moved in a wide swing, catching him off-guard as Fuyuki's fingers pushed into his neck, each digit nearly puncturing skin.

Gagging uncontrollably, Karamatsu pushed himself off of the man, feeling the skin pull on his hand before more pain blossomed in the area.

Fuyuki groaned as he stood up and moved over Karamatsu's kneeling form, "So, she was

your

bitch, huh?"

Karamatsu could feel satisfaction rolling off the guy in waves, launching a low shoulder rush at Fuyuki's knees in retaliation. Catching one of his legs as he almost dodged him, Karamatsu twisted around on the ground and punched him into the alley wall, immediately following up the attack with a hand against his head and roughly shoving it back into the wall. A snarl sounded from Fuyuki, trying to push back against Karamatsu from the pinned position he was in as Karamatsu let the beast have full control.

"Maybe I'll return the favor, Fuyuki."

Without warning, Karamatsu's enlarged canines and sharp fangs clamped down on Fuyuki's shoulder in the same spot where (y/n) had been forcefully claimed, ripping through the shirt fabric when he pulled away with a closed jaw, tearing off a healthy chunk of skin in the same motion. Blood began to spill from the wound, dribbling down Karamatsu's chin before he spat out the clump of flesh.

Fuyuki roared in pain and anger, pushing harder against the wall and giving himself just enough room to slam an elbow into Karamatsu's stomach. He flexed his abs to try and absorb some of the hit but the joint pinpointed the area right under his sternum, where the muscles weren't that strong, and Karamatsu staggered back.

A quick glance at his hand confirmed that it was partially flayed by Fuyuki's teeth, the small lull giving both opponents time to size each other up.

Karamatsu recovered his breathing and stood at his full height of 6'8", taking off the leather jacket and throwing it towards the alley entrance. He raised his bleeding left hand and licked the blood from the wound before spitting it onto the ground, maintaining his furious glare towards Fuyuki.

Fuyuki was standing only a few inches shorter than Karamatsu, but his build was nearly the same. His dark brown hair was slicked back with

styling gel and blood as he pushed a hand through his hair, his enraged blue eyes returning the glare with the same intensity Karamatsu was giving him.

If this fight continued, their stamina alone would determine who would be left standing.

Both Alphas charged each other at the same time, latching onto each other's clothes and landing punches and bites while completely abandoning their defense. Blows were countered or returned with more force than the previous hit, both fighters taking more ragged and deeper breaths as the conflict dragged on.

Fuyuki drove a knee into Karamatsu's diaphragm before he had a chance to knock aside the attack, staggering him and driving the taller Alpha into the brick wall behind him. Chasing after Karamatsu, Fuyuki gagged as someone grabbed the back of his shirt, completely stopping his forward progress before pulling him in the opposite direction, the person throwing the full-bodied Alpha into the pavement further down the alley. Karamatsu took in a shaky breath as his eyes registered the new contender wearing an unzipped blood red jacket.

Osomatsu.

"Tag."

The eldest chased after Fuyuki, pinning him down and grabbing a fistful of dark brown hair, pushing aside the heavier blows while letting the weaker ones glance off their mark. Osomatsu shoved Fuyuki's head into the pavement, a hollow thud echoing out in the alley as he repeated the motion until Fuyuki stopped fighting back.

With a final shove, Osomatsu stood up and turned towards Karamatsu, heaving a sigh when both Alphas made eye contact, "You look like shit."

Karamatsu looked over his body to see cuts, bites, and gashes open all over his arms and chest. Turning each limb as far as he could, the wounds continued revealing themselves as they freely bled or were coagulating over.

"How long did that last?" His voice was rough, sounding foreign in his ears.

"Thirty minutes. I kept the bouncers busy enough to divert their attention, but with the place closing down soon for the night..." Osomatsu bent down and picked up Karamatsu's leather jacket, giving it a quick brush down before holding it out for Karamatsu, "I figured it was time to stop."

"Shit...it took that long?" Karamatsu took the jacket and winced when he fully extended his arm.

"You wore each other down enough that I could intervene without much resistance."

"Damn," The younger Alpha groaned as he stooped down to pick up the drink bag, "You're welcome, I guess. Did you kill him?"

"Nah," Osomatsu popped open his last drink from the bag, looking at the unmoving Fuyuki, "Rattled his brains a bit, but nothing that's gonna get me locked up again. You messed him up more than me, though. Go take a look at your handiwork."

"No...If he did this to me, then I can imagine what I did to him."

"Heh, you always did hit harder when it was in retaliation," The older smirked before walking out of the alley, looking towards the horizon, "You better hurry."

Karamatsu hummed in question as he raised an eyebrow.

"Your mate's going to be waking up soon."

(Y/n) opened her eyes as the sound of running water filled the apartment, muffling small bits of swearing as Karamatsu took a shower. A small bit of panic flooded her mind when she smelled a faint trace of cinnamon, fresh cloves, and nutmeg, but felt an extra weight on top of her that drew her attention to the large orange-scented blanket spread out over her. Gripping the hem of the blanket tightly, she pulled herself from the bed and put on

the zippered sweatshirt that Karamatsu had worn yesterday over the white shirt she had borrowed, slipping on her Alpha's pajama bottoms and tucked the shirt's hem into the waistline.

(Y/n) only wanted to smell like Karamatsu, not anything that would remind her of--

Pushing past the thought, she walked down the hall and created a small nesting place on the couch as she wrapped the blanket around her, patiently waiting for Karamatsu to finish his morning shower by playing her favorite show on the TV. An episode passed before he left the bathroom, peering around the corner and smiling over at her before vanishing into the bedroom.

"Continuing where you left off?" Karamatsu asked as he re-emerged, rubbing a small towel over his head and dressed in a loose blue tank top and black sweatpants. She caught the sight of some bruising that flowered near his neck, following a trail of cuts down until they disappeared underneath the collar of the shirt.

"...yeah," (Y/n) watched as he settled himself on the other side of the couch before moving over the blanket to him, using his left pectoral as a pillow and tucking her right arm underneath the small of his back, "Busy night?"

"Not so much," Karamatsu laughed a little, "Just had to tie up a few loose strings. Nothing you need to concern yourself with, though."

"Are you sure?" She looked up at him, a questioning-yet-understanding look on her face.

"Positive," He leaned down a little and kissed her on the forehead, "Just a small chore that Osomatsu wanted to help with."

Dragon!Choromatsu x Reader

"No!" A young woman screamed at the top of her lungs, fighting to break free from the grip of the two men that held her down. Both of her arms were twisted around behind her while they attempted to shove her to the ground, their armored hands grabbing at her form as she kicked and struggled to break free, her harsh gaze locked onto a writhing form across the room from her.

A man was fighting against five soldiers, bulky men clad in heavy armor. His dark hair was completely disheveled as green liquid began to drip from his mouth, his sharp teeth gnashing in fury at those around him. Two black horns curled upwards from the sides of his head, the man using them like weapons as he was overwhelmed by the soldiers. His hands and feet weren't human, instead ending in green scales with each finger and toe wielding a sharp talon, and a thick green-scaled tail whipped around behind him. Two leathery wings were trying to unfurl from the man's back, the shirt torn and shredded from the abnormal appendages that matched the green coloration.

"Leave him be! We've done nothing wrong!" The woman yelled at the one soldier that stood apart from the others, his armor much more elaborate than theirs.

"Orders from the king. You're committing a crime by harboring a Dragon, wench," He snarled down at her, disgust in his eyes as he looked at her.

"That

Dragon

is my husband, and has been for the past few years!"

"A human laying with a Dragon? Don't be ridiculous..." The soldier knelt down and grabbed her chin, forcing her to look up higher at him, "Your words will cost you your life."

"Don't you touch her!" The Dragon snarled from underneath the pile of soldiers, a guttural growl echoing throughout the thatch home. The soldiers pulled away to reveal the Dragon now fully chained, a thick metallic muzzle over his nose and mouth with heavy chains wrapping his arms and legs together. The green liquid dripped through the openings of the muzzle, the droplets sizzling when they hit the floor and formed small divots in the packed dirt.

"Cooperate with us and she won't come to harm," The soldier released the woman's chin and looked back at the chained Dragon, "Resist and I can't guarantee her safety."

"Don't agree, Choromatsu...you know how they are!" The woman tried again to free herself and run to the Dragon's side, wanting to rip off the binding chains that made the once-proud man look so small.

The Dragon Choromatsu met her eyes briefly before looking away in resignation, the green liquid no longer flowing from his mouth. The soldier seemed satisfied with the gesture for an answer.

"Move out! We have what we came for," He walked out of the house, followed by the other soldiers dragging Choromatsu behind them like a slave forced to trail after its master.

"Choromatsu!" The woman jumped up when she felt the men's grip loosen, rushing towards her husband before being grabbed again from behind. The soldiers behind her shoved her back to the ground, pulling her hands back and locking them in place with something metallic. (Y/n) was dragged along behind them, stumbling on her feet as her home nestled within the fringes of the wood grew further and further away.

She knew that she was being taken to be collateral so Choromatsu wouldn't act out of line, and they wouldn't be kept in the same area alone. (Y/n) could only watch them drag Choromatsu far ahead of her, biting her lip as her mind raced with ideas to try and break free. If she was out of the picture, then he had a chance of breaking out as well.

The morning slowly crept towards afternoon and later into evening, the darkening horizon revealing a bright skyline.

The capital.

Choromatsu and (y/n) didn't live far away, since the previous king was much kinder to those that weren't human. However, he passed away a few years ago and his son took the throne, along with the hatred of any race that wasn't fully human. Laws were put into place that didn't make sense, businesses were closed down and families were forced to separate because some of them were considered 'sub-human'.

Even those who could wield magic weren't immune to the changes.

Choromatsu had wanted to stay in the home they had built together, despite the begging and pleading from (y/n) to leave and find a new life in a different country, just like his brothers had already done.

Now, it seemed that society had finally caught up to them.

The soldiers continued to march on, ignoring the jeering that Choromatsu and (y/n) were starting to receive from the cityfolk. No one questioned why they were bringing in a Dragon and a human, nor did anyone voice concern about the chains around either figure. (Y/n) raised her eyes towards the glistening gold statue of the current king, standing on a outcrop of rock with a wide smile on his face, his right hand holding a banner bearing his family crest while his left hand held a drawn sword towards the sky.

The previous statue of the former king made of carved rock had been destroyed, replaced with the gaudy pose of the prince.

"Move faster," The soldier tugged at her lead chain, pulling her towards a pristine building with a star emblem attached on the face, the windows covered in metal bars designed to keep everything inside. Choromatsu briefly looked behind him as he was led in a different direction, his eyes narrowing and trying to move towards (y/n).

"She stays with me!"

"Shut up, Dragon!" A loud crack of metal on skin sounded in the plaza, making (y/n) turn towards the noise. She could only gasp as a metal rod came down over and over across Choromatsu's back.

"Stop it! Leave him alone!" She pulled at her chains, fighting against the guards dragging her into the prison. With a ferocious twist, she ripped her lead from their hands and charged over to the soldier hitting Choromatsu. She cradled his head with her shoulder and neck as she ran into Choromatsu's torso, pushing him away so the metal rod was coming down on her back.

"Halt!"

(Y/n) braced for the hit that never came, feeling the warmth of Choromatsu's body against hers, the slight vibrations of his purring making her smile a little. The purrs turned into growls as Choromatsu curled around (y/n) as much as he could, his left shoulder covering her head as his tail tried to wrap around her right leg.

"What's going on here?" A different voice called out, stern and crisp.

"Sir, we located a Dragon and the human that sheltered it," The soldier with the ornate armor reported, "We were taking her in for questioning when she broke free."

"Hmm," A few moments passed before the person spoke again, "Throw it in with the others. The woman will be put into a rehabilitation program since the Dragon has clearly brainwashed her."

"No! I'm not brainwashed...!" (Y/n) cried out as Choromatsu was pulled away from her, her own chains keeping her from running to him again. A cloth was shoved between her teeth, preventing her from talking anymore.

"Clearly. Take them away."

"(Y/n)--!" Choromatsu resisted being pulled away, forcing the soldiers to be dragged two steps before more chains and men volunteered to 'tame the

ferocious beast'. (Y/n) watched with tears in her eyes as she was pulled away, the prison building door slamming shut behind her.

"Why were you sheltering the Dragon?" The female officer asked again, clearly not impressed with the first answer she got.

"He's my husband," (Y/n) frowned, her hands tied to the back of the wooden chair as a heavy iron collar sat around her neck.

"You're clearly still under its effects, even when separated..." The officer shook her head, "Poor woman. The Dragon never loved you; it only wanted you as a mate, and when it was through with you, it would've abandoned you like the toy you were to it."

"Don't shove your relationship problems onto me," She bit out each word, growing angrier with each phrase the officer was saying, "

He

loves me for who I am, and I love

him

. Your paranoia is your own problem. We weren't hurting anyone nor breaking any laws."

"Its presence within the capital territory limits is breaking one of the larger laws here!"

"So, just by existing, he's a problem to you?"

"Yes," The officer sighed.

"You racist bitch! Your cunt of a king and child of a ruler can jump off a cliff!"

(Y/n) saw the fist coming and braced herself, the punch landing squarely on her left cheek and sending her flying to the ground, the wooden chair shattering underneath her.

"What you're saying is treason, whore!"

"Oh, I'm sorry," (Y/n) coughed and put on a softer tone, "I didn't think that following a dick around was called 'being loyal'. I thought that was a prostitute's job."

"That's enough."

A male voice stopped the female officer from striking (y/n) again, the same voice as the commanding one from the square.

"Commander."

"Leave her be. It takes a few hours for the toxins to wear off," A large gauntlet reached down and dragged (y/n) to her feet by the neck collar, "You're dismissed, Sergeant."

"Sir," The female officer left through the same door the commander came through, closing it behind her.

(Y/n) stayed silent, waiting to see what this commander was going to do. He seemed to regard her with the same treatment, either expecting an outburst or contemplating on a punishment.

"I'm going to ask you a few questions. If you answer them honestly, then I'll allow you to see your Dragon again before it's carted off in the morning," His words brought her full attention to him, "First question: How long have you been 'married' to the Dragon?"

"Four years...I've been married to Choromatsu for four years," She swallowed a lump in her throat. If she could see him again, there may be a way to free him. The metal binding him was weak in certain places, and she was confident that the soldiers didn't know about them.

"Good. Second question: Have you bore children for it?"

"

Him

, and no I haven't...you should already know that's not how it works with Dragons," She glared at the commander. The biology between a human and a Dragon was just too different. A Dragon and a Mage could have kids, but humans were lacking quite a bit of what was needed to satisfy a Dragon egg.

"Very well..." The look in the commander's eyes shifted, sending a chill down (y/n)'s spine, "Third question: What would you do to ensure

his

freedom?"

Her face paled. She already knew her answer, and what could happen if she responded truthfully.

"...anything..."

Choromatsu groaned as his body slowly healed the bruises that were forming from the beating he'd gotten once he was dragged into this cell, his clothes torn to shreds and the cold metal of the shackles preventing him from moving both his wings and tail around too much. The dry hay underneath him didn't serve much as a cushion from the packed gravel below, and the bars of his cell were small enough for him to see others in similar positions: Dragons, Mages, and other races that weren't fully human.

He collapsed onto the hay, laying on his side as he reached up to his face, the hand covers of his wrist bindings preventing his talons from scratching at the muzzle. His acid had no effect on it or any other metal he was bound with.

It had been hours since he last saw (y/n), last felt her body against his in the courtyard. Choromatsu hoped that nothing was happening with her, that

they left her alone because she was a human like they were.

Yes, she was his wife, but the affairs of humans had always confused him.

A door opened somewhere in the building, the squeaking hinges announcing that someone was coming into the holding area. Several others stirred to see what was happening, but the scent hit his nose before anyone spoke.

(Y/n) is injured.

Choromatsu crawled into a kneeling position, watching as two people rounded the corner of his aisle and walked down it, one stumbling along with the other pushing them forward. A long growl escaped his throat when the two people stopped in front of his cell, the noise growing more intense as he recognized the man from the square standing behind (y/n).

"You've brainwashed her well, Dragon. She's your whore, through and through."

The door opened and Choromatsu lept towards the man before (y/n) was shoved into him, both of them falling back into the cell before the door slammed shut again. The man chuckled to himself as he walked away, twirling the key around his index finger.

"(Y/n)..." Choromatsu turned his full attention towards his wife sprawled across his body, visually drinking in each detail about her that had changed since he last saw her. Her hair was messy and out of place from its usual style, there were long scratches along her arms and legs, but what made his blood boil were the hickeys scattered across her skin. The disheveled appearance of her clothes sealed what had happened to her in his mind.

Pushing past the anger, he rubbed his head against hers, laying her out gently on the hay as he began to redress her as much as he could. His fury was less important than her care right now.

"Choromatsu...can you shift?" (Y/n)'s voice was raw, as if she had been screaming for hours.

"No...it's like something is stopping me," He brought his muzzle to her cheek, resting his forehead against hers.

"Okay. I think I figured out...how to get out of here..." She smiled in tired victory, reaching up and scratching behind his horns before trailing her fingers to his metal collar. Her thin fingers slowly wormed their way between his skin and the metal, the digits working around something before they both heard a snap.

Sitting up, (y/n) reached behind his head and did the same thing with the clasps holding the muzzle to his face, the contraption falling off his face seconds later.

"For a blacksmith, you work pretty quickly," Choromatsu licked his lips to moisten them, feeling his acid from earlier lingering on the raw skin before spitting out a small gob of leftover acid onto the floor.

"Yeah, that comes with experience...and the smiths that they used weren't properly trained in this kind of equipment," (Y/n) softly laughed before moving down to his hands, a thin tool dancing between her fingers as she made quick work of his cuffs.

Before (y/n) could do anything else, Choromatsu reached out and pulled her close, breathing in her scent and rubbing his cheek against her head. She responded with a partial hug, her wrists still chained together, before pushing him away.

"We need to leave quickly. We don't have a lot of time."

"Right."

Choromatsu offered his back, letting her do what she could before the commander came back, soon feeling his wings no longer restricted and his tail no longer forced into a crimped position. As (y/n) broke the shackles tethering his feet together, the area door opened again and the sound of someone's heeled boot clacking against the gravel filled the room.

"Hold on..." Choromatsu growled as his body swelled, the green scales from his arms and legs quickly spreading across his whole form. (Y/n) ducked underneath him as Choromatsu's new size broke open the cell, his horns tearing apart the ceiling as he continued to grow. His bipedal form hunched into a quadruped shape, the muscles adjusting as the human form morphed into a four-legged Dragon.

"Sound the alarm!" The commander cried out as the building tore itself apart, Choromatsu's new form unable to be contained by the feeble stone walls. Choromatsu let out a roar, acid spewing forth and hitting the gravel with a sizzle.

"Run, Choromatsu...!" (Y/n) yelled as she climbed onto his broad back amidst the rubble falling around her. When she settled into a spot right behind his neck, Choromatsu burst from the building, leaping out into a panicked city and spreading his wings wide. The street they were on was wide enough for Choromatsu to get some wind underneath his large wings, climbing over and out of the capital. Beneath him, spears failed to reach their intended target and arrows were pushed aside by the gust of his wings.

Still the pair climbed.

Choromatsu didn't stop climbing until the capital was a speck in the distance, the dark night sky providing perfect cover from those looking for him.

"(Y/n), are you all right?" The deep voice of his full Dragon form always sent shivers down her spine.

"Yeah...now can I convince you we need to move?" She rubbed his neck scales, constantly amazed that such a powerful creature would want to hide in plain sight, her husband always wanting to walk with her in his hybrid form. There was no wind blowing, so Choromatsu had to work a bit to keep them aloft as his muscles moved in a steady rhythm.

"Absolutely..." He laughed a little as his wings tilted towards the rising full moon, "Just...don't mention the reason why we're moving to my brothers, okay?"

"Why not?" (Y/n) laughed with him.

"They'd never let me forget about it."

"I promise I won't tell them," She leaned down and kissed his neck spines, "Just...remember to break my chains when we land, okay?"

Choromatsu x Soulmate!Reader

(There is some heavy mentions of explicit material towards the end, but there are no NSFW scenes.)

I've always been told that seeing the red string tightly wound around my finger was supposed to be a thrilling experience, driving a desperate need to travel in the direction that the string was pointing towards.

However, I could only stare across the round table in shock, the little red string around my left ring finger tugging towards the man sitting directly across from me. He was laughing along with the five other men that were identical to him, pointing at someone sitting near him with his chopsticks before taking a long swing of his drink.

Choromatsu was the third eldest of the sextuplet brothers, the signature green color dyeing his button-up shirt and emboldening the plaid design. Grabbing some meat from the hot pot dinner in the middle of the table, his eyes closed happily as laughter rolled around the table once more before opening them to glance over at me. The giddiness disappeared from his face slowly until he finally registered the shock and horror on my face.

"(Y/n), what's wrong?" Choromatsu's concern silenced the table, the other brothers looking towards me as they all began to mimic his worried expression.

"You don't look so good," The youngest brother quickly pressed the back of his hand against my forehead, pulling it away before setting his dinnerware down, "There's no fever that I can feel."

"Actually, Todomatsu," I grabbed a hold of the excuse and ran with it, "I

am

starting to feel a bit under the weather. I'll head back to my hotel room and rest. Hopefully, tomorrow will be a better day."

Todomatsu screwed his lips up in thought before glancing over at the eldest brother, clad in his signature red sweatshirt, "If you're sure of it. We've always got a room available for you if you want."

"No, really," I set down my half-eaten food, which was instantly grabbed and finished by the second-youngest sextuplet, "I just need...some peace and quiet for the night."

"You just got into town, though," The eldest stood up with me, "I'm sure our parents would love to see you in the morning."

"Thanks, Osomatsu..." I tried waving to the brothers to go back to their meal, "I'll stop by in the morning."

"Need one of us to walk you to your hotel?" The second eldest offered, his thick eyebrows barely pinching together in concern.

"Nope, all good," I felt the string on my finger tug harder towards Choromatsu like it was trying to get my attention, "The food was delicious, though. Jyushimatsu can have my portion, so don't worry about that."

"Really?" The aforementioned brother propped himself up on the table, his smile wide and giddy as he brazenly took my plate and filled it up with food again, "Thanks, (y/n)!"

"You're welcome and sleep well, guys!" I closed the front door behind me, my jacket and shoes in my arms as I scrambled to leave the house. The string tightened itself around my finger in protest as I quickly ran down the street to the hotel.

The running water slowly cooled, causing me to nearly jump from the large bathtub in shock. I quickly rinsed out the conditioner in my hair before shutting off the waterflow, grabbing the hotel towel and rubbing my damp hair vigorously as I stepped out into the bathroom.

My hands slowed as I stared at the red string still firmly attached to my ring finger, knowing who was on the other end.

Choromatsu and I had been extremely close our whole lives, remaining in contact while I was away at university, but I couldn't see us being soulmates. Fate, however, seemed to have a different idea and must've been laughing its head off when it decided to reveal the red string at the dinner table.

Tossing the towel onto the tiled bathroom floor, I eyed a small pair of sewing scissors that I had pulled out for repairing my well-worn jeans. The horror stories of those who cut the red string of fate were numerous, ranging from never finding love in anything they did after cutting the string to immediate death. I could think of everything negative that would result in cutting the tight string around my finger, yet nothing seemed to push the dangerous thought out of my head.

This was

Choromatsu

: my best friend and lifelong buddy that played the straight man within the sextuplet brothers. I never would have imagined that he was my soulmate, not even entertaining the idea of seeing

any

of them in that kind of light.

My fingers trembled as I picked up the scissors, sliding the bottom arm between my skin and the thread.

I'd rather risk not loving anyone ever again...

"(Y/n), it's Karamatsu and Choromatsu," A knock rapped against the hotel door, the interruption drawing my attention to the vibrating string still stubbornly wrapped around my ring finger. I had tried to cut it many times

since a few nights ago, but every time I started to close the scissors, I lost the will to do it and pulled the cutting implement away.

"One moment," I stood up from the writing desk, pulling myself away from the writing that I was doing. Large and small books lay scattered across the surface with only a small space for my letter-sized paper to rest. Turning the locking mechanism open, I swung the door wide to let the two in, "What brings you guys here?"

"Well, you, for one," Choromatsu glanced at the desk before sitting on the loveseat in the hotel suite, "We've tried calling your phone a few times before giving up. You never changed the number back to your Japanese one, so we kept getting charged for the overseas cost."

"Ah, shoot," I pressed my thumb into my bottom lip, "I knew I forgot something...I'll change that today, seeing as I'll be here for the next few months and I'd rather not charge my clients an arm and a leg to contact me via phone."

"That's a good idea," Karamatsu laughed as he pulled out one of the chairs at the small kitchenette table, stradling it with the hard back pressing against his chest, "The second is that we're still worried about your sudden sickness and wanted to see how you were feeling since then."

"The dinner..." My voice trailed off as both brothers nodded in affirmation, "Well, I'm feeling much better now. I guess it was just my stomach getting used to Japanese cuisine again."

I offered a small laugh, but knew they didn't buy it. Karamatsu glanced at Choromatsu as the younger nervously ran his left hand through his combed hair.

"There's...a third thing, but it mainly revolves around Choromatsu," The older of the two commented quietly, his words making my body freeze up, "Your response tells me that you may already have an idea..."

I silently cursed the acuteness of Karamatsu's perception. He noticed everything that everyone did, even when they weren't focused on him.

"I may..." I glanced towards Choromatsu, "But I don't want to jump to conclusions, so please tell me."

"I--" Choromatsu heavily hesitated, the silence pregnant with anticipation as he looked towards Karamatsu with uncertainty. He closed his eyes when the older man met his gaze, letting out a deep sigh and looking up to me, "This is stupid."

Karamatsu stood up and intercepted Choromatsu before the green-clad brother could fully stand up from the loveseat, placing a hand on his shoulder and forcing him to sit down. He leaned in close and whispered something to Choromatsu's ear, standing back up and leaving the hotel room completely.

"I'm happy to see you back, (y/n), and please...don't forget to visit us when you've got time in your schedule," Karamatsu gave a wink as the door closed behind him, "We're still the NEETs that you love."

With that, the door shut with a heavy thud and sealed Choromatsu and I in the hotel room. My heart slowly started to race as the silence stretched out while Choromatsu nervously wrung his hands together.

"I don't know how to say this without sounding like a pervert..."

"Is it about the red string?"

His focus snapped up to me, the dark hues wide in shock as his mouth opened and closed while trying to form words to speak. I let out a light sigh and shifted in my seat by the desk, my thumb idly rubbing the string on my own hand.

"It's on mine, too."

"But...!" Choromatsu struggled for words, "It's--!"

"Weird, I know. I've tried cutting it off, since I can't see you as anything other than who you've always been to me," I leaned back as I tried to get

comfortable, "You'd think that it would've shown up much earlier since we spent our childhood together."

"I know, right?" He seemed to relax a little as I spoke, his right hand playing with the top few buttons of his shirt nervously, "But, (y/n)...this is

wrong

. You know it is and I know it is...so what can we do?"

I remained quiet, thinking about what could happen if we did as the strings were absolutely wanting us to do.

If we became close as a couple, the strings would either tie together and create a strong romantic bond between the two of us, or fall from our fingers and never reappear. Most couples that had the strings fall off continued to see each other and eventually marry despite the hard work that they needed to put into the relationship.

Fate gave us the strings to find the one we were most compatible with as a married couple, but it was up to us to make it work.

"Did you..." I paused as I nervously bit my bottom lip, "...want to still try?"

"

(Y/n)

!" Choromatsu stood up like I had just confessed to killing the Japanese prime minister.

"Hear me out!" I held both of my hands in surrender as I tried to get him to calm down enough to listen to my reasoning, "If we try it and the strings fall off, then that's it. We bury this so deep in the ground that we'll never speak of it ever again."

"But what if they tie together?"

"They won't...at least, I don't think they will. We've been together our whole lives, and only

now

does the red string show up? It's gotta be a fluke."

"And if they do anyway?" His hands tucked behind his back, his dark gaze nervous as his voice rose a little higher in pitch.

"...then I'm going to cut mine," I looked up at Choromatsu, "You've still got your life ahead of you, wanting to marry and have kids. I don't really want or need that in my career, so I'll suffer the consequences. You'll be free to move on to better pastures while I--"

"

No

, (y/n)," Choromatsu's eyes suddenly became stern, his pointed frown deepening, "I'll be the one to cut my string. I'm almost thirty and already a huge disappointment to my parents. The others can have a chance at that life, but I'm done chasing it."

"Choro--" I stood up in shock, the chair rolling away from me. His firm gaze never faltered as I let my arms fall slack to my sides, "You really mean it..."

"Of course, I do. I may have broken my word many other times, but I will not budge on this one. You

will

get to find someone you love freely and form a family with that person," He closed the distance between us, resting his hands on my shoulders before pulling me close into a hug, "So...let's just try this and move forward with the plan, regardless of what outcome it has."

"Are you sure?" My hands slowly tightened on the shirt fabric against his back, feeling his hot breath dance across my ear before he pulled his head away, "I don't want to try this if we're both going to regret it..."

"I promise," I shuddered as Choromatsu's lips lightly pressed against the side of my neck, "You will be treated with the highest respect, (y/n), just like I would offer any woman I'd bed."

I felt myself lifted from the hug, feeling the edge of the king-sized bed press against the back of my knees before Choromatsu carefully lay both of us down onto it, his lips leaving a trail of kisses from my neck to my lips. My hands shifted from his back to his chest, the fingers clinging to the loose fabric as I kissed him back.

"Please be gentle...it's my first time, as well, big brother."

Pilot!Choromatsu and CabinAttendant!Reader

"If you even dare to pull the stunt you did a few days ago, I will

end

you," Choromatsu glared at the pilot-in-command, his older brother grinning widely and glancing back at him from the pilot's seat.

"You mean 'safely landing the plane in hazardous icy conditions'?" Osomatsu's grin shifted into a smirk as his tongue licked at the corner of his top lip, his eyes partially closing, "There's no way I'd mess that up."

"Swear to God that you're useless in most scenarios," The other copilot shook his head, calibrating some sensors before communicating with the air traffic control tower.

"Ouch," Osomatsu rubbed his chest in mock pain, looking back at the third eldest as he readied for the flight in one of the cockpit passenger seats, "What about you? Happy to be flying with your girl again?"

"She's

not

my girl, Osomatsu," Choromatsu couldn't hide the furious blush from the verbal jab, glancing to his left at the closed door that divided the cockpit from the cabin. There were five cabin attendants on this leg of the flight, all of them under the watch of the youngest sextuplet brother, but one of the attendants stood out to Choromatsu since she started taking the international assignments -- a spunky young woman named (y/n) Tsushima.

She was still training to be a head cabin attendant, more than likely to be assigned to other flights after completing her course.

"Uh-huh, sure," Osomatsu reached over and smacked the second copilot in the shoulder, "Is our bet still on, Karamatsu?"

"I'm not betting on anything," His stern glare didn't dissuade Osomatsu as he continued radio contact with the tower, grabbing directions and numbers before repeating them in confirmation, "We're clear to taxi short and stop. Want to make the announcement?"

"Yeah, yeah..." Osomatsu adjusted the headset microphone to rest just beneath his chin, taking in a breath before activating the PA system.

Choromatsu let his head lull back until it rested against the padded headrest, closing his eyes for a moment as the rare silence settled between the three brothers in the cockpit. His arms crossed across his chest as he took a slow breath.

The takeoff had been very uneventful, almost disappointingly for Osomatsu, and Choromatsu reminded him that he wasn't able to 'take the wheel' until they had passed the cruising altitude.

"Pardon the intrusion, captain," A familiar voice caught all three pilots' attention as the door to the cockpit opened, Choromatsu about to berate the person for entering without permission before seeing the familiar colored hair that appeared to be more frazzled than usual. (Y/n) closed the door behind her with finality, her eyes locked on the handle for the moment before turning to face the pilot-in-command, "Please give me a few minutes to breathe."

"Why? What's going on?" Choromatsu motioned for her to sit in the other spare seat, watching her face carefully as she obliged, "Are passengers complaining about the flying?"

"Oh, like you'd do better--" Osomatsu started before Karamatsu spoke over him.

"Take what time you need, Ms. Tsushima. It's not like any of us can run anywhere from a bad situation."

"Thank you, Mr. Matsuno," She looked over at him as she pulled the scrunchie from her hair, running a few fingers through her hair to try combing it out before pulling it all back into her original hairstyle, "Just a drunk passenger, that's all. He's absolutely harmless...thought I was cosplaying for a moment of fuzziness."

"A drunkard?" Choromatsu slightly narrowed his eyes, "Did he come on with alcohol?"

"A single bottle that he bought in the terminal. He may be a nervous flier and accidentally had too much before the flight," She nodded before setting her hands back down on her lap, "Todomatsu is taking my charge while I swap with his first class passengers."

"Will you need help?" The co-pilot immediately picked up on the opportunity, "I'm just sitting back here with nothing to do, so maybe giving the passengers a new face to look at may not be bad."

"Doing some PR work then?" Karamatsu looked over to the third-oldest, ignoring the glare from the oldest.

"I mean -- if you'd like the help," Choromatsu held up his hands, thinking he was pushing too hard.

"I'm sure the passengers wouldn't mind," (Y/n) nodded before taking a deep breath in, "Sorry again for intruding, captain."

"Eh...no worries," Osomatsu lazily waved a hand in the air as his focus returned to the instruments in front of him, "Just knock next time so we don't think we're being hijacked."

Choromatsu unbuckled himself from the seat and followed (y/n) out into the passenger area of the plane, following her orders as he greeted the first class passengers and answered their questions about the flight. (Y/n) walked in tandem with him down the other aisle, taking care of orders and removing garbage that the passengers made since the plane left the ground. Every so often, he would find himself looking over at her before sweeping his eyes around like he was just checking out the area.

Eight hours into the international flight, Choromatsu sat at the controls as Osomatsu rested in one of the escort seats with a sleeping mask covering his eyes. Karamatsu was also resting, but remained in his chair. The third oldest knew that he would wake up if there were any alarms that sounded in the cabin, no matter how 'quiet' they were.

Essentially left with the cockpit to himself, Choromatsu went through his bi-hourly checks easily and ensured that everything within the cargo area was still in acceptable parameters, quietly pressing buttons and ensuring the numbers on the screens remained in parameters set by the company.

This was his favorite part of the flight. The loud and obnoxious pilot-in-command was usually napping for a few hours when they hit their cruise ceiling, and the stern and focused copilot was exhausted from dealing with him the entire time, leaving the second copilot in charge for most of the quiet flight.

Choromatsu considered himself just as skilled as a pilot like his older two brothers, but they excelled in specific situations that were found towards the beginning and end of a flight: rough landings, harsh weather, and some mountainside turbulence. Choromatsu was skilled in navigating high altitude turbulence, avoiding some pockets while taking others in stride.

His grip tightened on the yoke as his brow furrowed, his thoughts turning from the skies to the last time he crossed the Pacific Ocean a few days ago, mentally going through the scenario that their plane had encountered on the last flight: heavy icing.

Frustration grew at some of the lackadaisical ground crew in America that had not sprayed enough de-icer on the wings to cover the first few hours, the incoming winter storm threatening to suspend the flight entirely. Osomatsu had pushed the crew to work harder, snagging himself a good spot in the line before takeoff, and the tires left the ground about ten minutes before the cancellations started.

Choromatsu replayed the memory about the plane beginning to experience icing conditions on the climb up to its cruising altitude, having to figure out a way to navigate the flight path with heavier-than-normal wings.

A soft knock drew his attention from the mental simulation to the cockpit door, "Yes?"

"Mr. Matsuno," (Y/n)'s voice curled around the edge of the door, not fully opening it, "May I enter?"

"Of course," Choromatsu's voice softened, motioning for her to speak quietly as she sat down in the closest passenger seat to the door, "What's going on, Ms. Tsushima?"

"The crew resting area already has an occupant, but I was just hoping that I'd be able to grab a little bit of sleep here," Her voice was soft, making him pull off one side of his headset to hear her through the cushioning.

"Are you not able to wait for an opening?"

"They slept through my break, but they've been having a rough time at home with family...so we're letting them have what they can here," (Y/n) stifled a yawn, "My nap won't be more than ten minutes."

"I'd say 'take what time you need' but I have a feeling that the head cabin attendant needs you back on the floor after your nap," Choromatsu tried to give a reassuring smile, knowing that (y/n) was still in training to take his youngest brother's position on other flights.

"I think you're right on that, Mr. Matsuno," She closed her eyes and leaned back into the still chair, letting her arm act as a pillow while she leaned against the armrest, "Ten minutes and no longer."

The alarm (y/n) had set was loud in the silence that Choromatsu had maintained in the cockpit, jolting Karamatsu and (y/n) awake while Osomatsu vocally protested the rude awakening.

"Who the

hell

let an alarm go off in here?" Osomatsu pulled off the sleeping mask covering his eyes, his sight sweeping across the cockpit to land on (y/n)'s waking form as she rushed to shut off the wristwatch, "Well, if it isn't Ms. Tsushima..."

"Mr. Matsuno, I'm so sorry!" She quickly rubbed her face and corrected her hair as she stood out of the chair, her cheeks flushed with color in embarrassment, "I didn't think it would be that loud."

"As long as it wasn't one of my brothers trying to get a rise out of me," He lifted a leg and kicked the back of Choromatsu's chair, prompting the copilot to turn around and level a harsh glare that was met with a returning glower.

"We're a few hours out from our descent point," Karamatsu adjusted his position in the seat as he took in the readings and compared them to the manuscript of the radio, drawing (y/n)'s attention from the dueling brothers, "You're going to be needed, Ms. Tsushima."

"Right," Excusing herself from the cockpit, the silence that once enveloped the area was shattered by Osomatsu grabbing Choromatsu's collar from behind.

"Remind me why you let her set an alarm."

"I didn't realize that she had one set!" Choromatsu yanked Osomatsu's hand from his collar before taking off the headset, pushing the chair back so the pilot-in-command could take over, "It's not my fault."

"No, you just weren't thinking with the right head," The eldest grunted as he took his new position, slipping on the headset and focusing on the controls while taking in the readings from the instruments, "Swear to God, you just need to be assertive with her. Ask her out on a date already."

"You know I can't," Choromatsu slumped down into the chair that (y/n) had used to rest, buckling himself in before leaning against the armrest and glaring at the pilot-in-command, "Company policy."

"Then get yourself fired."

"Like I can do that!" The third oldest scoffed, rolling his eyes to look at the small cubby where their jackets were hanging, "The benefits are too good."

"You know, it's not bad to remain friends," Karamatsu commented, glancing back at the younger brother before clearing his throat, "Everyone could use a good friend like you, Choromatsu."

"Uh-huh..." Skepticism was heavy in his voice, "Says that man who has more lady friends than the rest of us combined."

"I can't help that they like my personality. You'll find someone who will be right for you."

"...so we thank you for your patience and for choosing Matsuno Airlines. Welcome to Atlanta, Georgia," Osomatsu spoke calmly in Japanese before Karamatsu repeated his words in English, turning off the PA system before letting out a sigh, "Time to start the final landing clearance before crashing in the sleeping suite..."

"They've got us booked in a hotel for the next two days," Karamatsu quietly reminded him, "Next flight back to Tokyo has been postponed because of the weather."

"Another storm?"

"Massive blizzard supposed to hit in a few hours," He responded, pulling off the headset and handing it up above his seat, "Since the airport we fly out of is going to be snowed in for a little bit, the boss wants us to stay here until it's clear."

"Ah, damn it..." Osomatsu groaned as he leaned his head back, his eyes glancing over to see Choromatsu going through his own landing checklist, "Got any plans in the meantime?"

"Me?" Choromatsu looked over at him, "No, not really. Since I'm going to be stuck with you both for the next few days, I'm probably going to be

reading up on some library books I brought with me."

"Lame."

"What about finally getting the balls to ask her on that date?" Karamatsu looked over his shoulder before focusing on the instruments again, "She'll be stuck here, too."

"As will the whole crew. What makes her special?" Osomatsu rolled his eyes.

"I

told

you -- she's not my girl and we can't date because of company policy."

"Then make it a wellness check," The second oldest offered like it was a no-brainer, "You'll spend some time with her regardless."

"...what if she has a husband?" Choromatsu couldn't hide the nervousness in his voice.

"Didn't see a ring," Osomatsu cut him off.

"Well, what about a boyfriend?"

"Totty said that she was single," Karamatsu offered.

A blush began to cover Choromatsu's cheeks, "Well--"

"Just go do it, already!" Osomatsu shoved the copilot hard in the shoulder, sending him stumbling forward in shock, "You've been pining after this woman for months, and you've yet to even let her know that you're mildly interested in her. Ask her or I will."

"...you don't even like her," The third oldest leveled a glare at him.

"She doesn't know that," Osomatsu's eyes hardened as he stared back at Choromatsu, the dark hues unsettling, "The hunt is always better than the kill."

"Fine!" Choromatsu stood up, throwing the checklist at Osomatsu and hitting him in the face, drawing a guffaw from the oldest as he opened the door to see a completely empty cabin. The blush completely vanished from his face as he carefully looked to see that the cabin attendants had taken all of their belongings from their assigned overhead bins, which meant that the rest of the flight crew had disembarked.

Grabbing his own things from the cockpit and gripping the luggage tightly, he wheeled it behind him as the jacket partially bounced over his other arm, not wanting to wear it for fear of wasting time.

The walkway was quiet before he stepped into the gate area, quickly looking towards the signs to find the exit signs and hearing the sound of retreating footsteps, most of them sounding like heels. Taking long strides, he practically charged into the terminal and saw the crew, including his youngest brother, as they slowly made their way to the shuttles.

"Ms. Tsushima, wait!" He called out, his voice much louder than he intended, but couldn't help smiling when the said flight attendant turned back at her name, "I'd like to speak with you."

Totty and another attendant quickly rushed the others on, knowing looks on their faces as Totty gave (y/n) a thumbs up.

"Yes, Mr. Matsuno?" (Y/n) had her own uniform jacket slung over her right forearm, the smallish four-wheeled luggage handle resting loosely in her left hand as she stood still, "What can I help you with?"

"I was...wanting to know how that passenger was for the remainder of the flight," Choromatsu bit his lip nervously, "You know...the one that was harassing you?"

"Oh," She almost sounded disappointed, "He recovered well and slept for most of the flight. There were no further instances and we returned his drink

when he disembarked."

Silence filled the space between them as Choromatsu took a few steps closer.

"Oh...is that so?"

"Yes, sir," Her gaze fell to the ground as she nodded, the look of sadness replacing the disappointment, "If that's all, then I'd like to head to the hotel for some proper sleep...It is eleven-o'clock at night, Mr. Matsuno..."

She took a step away from him before Choromatsu unconsciously reached out and grabbed her left wrist, immediately pulling his hand away when she looked back at him in shock.

"Sorry!" The tightness in his throat was clear for both parties to hear, "I...I actually wanted to talk to you about something else."

The shock in her expression was slowly replaced with understanding, "Yes?"

"Would you...would you mind if I checked up on you tomorrow? After you get rest and all that..."

"A wellness check?" Her right eyebrow lifted with confusion, "Is that...necessary?"

"Well, it wouldn't really be a 'wellness check'...but...uhh..." Choromatsu squeezed his eyes shut, bowed down to ninety degrees and held out his right arm straight towards her, stiffening his fingers, "Please go out on a date with me!"

Silence erupted in Choromatsu's ears, fearful of moving from the position to see that (y/n) had vanished at the awkward and sudden request. Sweat began to pour down his face as he nervously chewed on his bottom lip, wondering how long he had been bowing before the click of a heel against the polished tile drew his focus in front of him, his eyes widening as a pair of black kitten heels stopped at the top of his field of vision.

"How about--" He flinched when someone touched his hand, pulling him out of the steep bow as his vision moved from the floor to looking at (y/n). Her face was completely flushed as she held eye contact with him, "--we just start with an informal get-together, tomorrow early afternoon around ten-thirty in the hotel lobby. We can grab something to drink, then we'll go from there."

"Yeah, sure," His voice slowly lowered back to its usual tone, "That sounds like a better idea, Ms. Tsushima."

"One other thing," (Y/n) let go of his hand, pressing something into his palm before turning around and walking towards the exit, "You can call me (y/n)."

Choromatsu stood completely still, feeling his skin heat up to uncomfortable levels as his heart pounded in his chest like it was trying to do a drum solo. When he was finally able to move his head, he looked down into his hand, he saw her business card -- complete with her cell phone number.

Cyaegha!Choromatsu and Reader

Freihaustgarten.

My ancestral home for decades, and the only village that was insane enough to remain cradled in the foothills close to Mount Dunkelhugel.

The small village that I was being driven to by a small horse-drawn buggy, as the roads were too narrow for the more modern vehicles.

The clattering gravel underneath the metal horseshoes had become a droning noise that my brain drifted off to, leaving my head completely empty of the tumultuous thoughts that I carried when I received the letter from my family still living in Freihaustgarten.

They wrote with hasty script, the German barely recognizable through the apparent rushed writing as they begged me to return home and help with the failing farm that we owned. In fact, that's the only thing that was written on the letter besides the usual signatures of my mother and father.

"

Frauline

, I can go no further. The horse is spooked and refuses to move," The driver called out and snapped me from my trance, drawing my attention from the buggy onto the still scenery around us.

"Ah, thank you. Have a safe drive back," I climbed out of the horse-drawn buggy and hauled my luggage off of the rear rack, turning back towards the road to the village without bidding the driver farewell.

I was never this rude before...

My eyes moved upwards from the road to the barely lit village as the mountain cast its shadow over it, the sun dipping earthward quickly and

allowing the warmer temperature to dive. The cool mountain air tugged at the sleeves of my sweatshirt, forcing my fingers to find somewhere with warmth as I adjusted to the early nighttime moments.

"Back home...never wanted to leave in the first place."

The walk to the family farm was the same as travelling down memory lane, seeing familiar sights and scenes play out in my head as I passed the old family heirloom tree with its broken swings, treading by the creek now swollen with the melting ice from the mountain as the seasons shifted into spring, silently walking past the torn down shed that had housed several of the needed tools to keep the farm running.

It was an odd comfort to see the gathering of artifacts from my childhood, each of them passed down from father to father as sons were born into our family.

I had been cut out of the family because I had broken tradition and moved to a different country, wanting to pursue a better life than farmwork. I didn't want to stay here, but the longer I looked around and saw the state of the

thriving

farmlands, the more I wanted to...not go away again.

It felt like an old comfort had wrapped itself around my mind and started begging me to stay here.

"

Mama

?

Vati

? I'm back," I called out to my parents as I pushed open the unlocked front door, dragging in the luggage and letting it rest against one of the walls near the entryway, "Anyone?"

Silence was my answer.

"

Vati

? Are you caught up in your woodworking again?"

My father didn't answer as I looked back towards his workshop near the kitchen, the long hallway seemingly stretching out further as the silence began to ring in my ears.

"

Mama

?" I quickly shifted my gaze towards where I remembered her favorite seat to knit, the rocking chair left empty with the yarn discarded onto the floor. I kicked off my shoes and dashed into the house, my mind oddly calm despite the fact that my parents weren't home.

"

Leute, wo seid ihr

?" My frantic thoughts fighting through the calm as panic began to take hold of my voice, the question repeating itself as I asked them where they were.

'They're probably out back,'

The words in my head didn't seem like my own but I believed them easily, moving towards the back door and opening it. The backyard was empty, but the rear gate was open and revealed a well-worn trail beyond as it wound through the foothills towards Mount Dunkelhugel,

'I should go check on them.'

That familiar calm wrapped tighter around my mind as my bare feet carried me through the open gate and up the footpath, the dirt soft beneath the soles as I took careful steps up towards Dunkelhugel. A steady thrumming began to fill the air as the path wound its way up through the higher foothills before disappearing into the mountainside, my heart slowing down a little to match the beat that I could feel on my skin. The mountain itself seemed to be whispering my name, a sudden pull drawing my attention towards the cave that the path led up to.

I didn't want to be here.

I longed to be in the cave.

My mind became torn with both desire and disgust at the sudden thoughts coursing through my head of staying here and helping the family...do something, and it definitely wasn't related to farmwork.

'Closer and closer,'

The foreign words came again, the voice speaking them certainly not my own...yet sounding just like me at the same time,

'Come closer and be homeward bound.'

Homeward bound...this

was

my home.

My left hand lifted and grasped at a rough cloth, startling my consciousness at the loss of time and realization that I had made the normally twenty-minute trek in seemingly seconds, my thoughts lost within themselves as they fought with each other about where I really belonged.

A long-distant memory surfaced on the inky well of my thoughts, my eyes catching the familiar statues and carvings of vulture-like creatures that were embedded within the cave walls, all of them staring down at me with heavy judgement. There were five colors: green, white, orange, red, and black.

No, the creatures had names...

The Green Moon.

The White Fire Which Is Darker Than The Night.

The Winged Woman.

The White Dark Which Is More Red Than The Fire.

The Black Light

.

My mouth went dry at the memory, somehow pulling the names from some dark place in my mind as I remembered wearing the same rough cloth before, the very same one that I had wrapped around my naked form tightly.

When had I undressed?

I could remember opening a hidden door deep within the cave's rearmost wall, my hand reaching out and brushing my fingertips against the well-worn crevice that hid a wooden lever. Pulling it up, I calmly watched as the rock face against the rear wall moved enough to allow me to squeeze through to the other side without harm.

I didn't want to know what happened next, but could hear the faint echoes of the past resonate off the walls around me as the wall closed tightly behind me.

I was only a child! I shouldn't have had to see what happened next!

But what happened?

My feet remembered some path that I had no memory of, feeling myself get pulled more towards the core of the mountain, down a well-trodden dirt path that had torchlight illuminating its dangers to those that walked along it. The path was pressed against the side of the mountain, a hollowed out tunnel spiralling downwards into the earth as the same five creatures from

before watched those that walked underneath them, their colored eyes staring without direction.

I was late. I needed to hurry.

I should run away. I needed to be back home.

'Come closer and be homeward bound.'

Further down, further down!

My mind pressed my body forward, my hands loosening their grip on the rough cloak hiding my body as I picked up the pace,

Don't be late, don't be late!

I saw several hunched figures standing near the end of the path, their slime-colored cloaks hiding what they really looked like as I drew closer.

"You are late," The first one spoke, their voice thick and rough to listen to as they tried to speak past some kind of lump in their throat.

"I just arrived," My mouth spoke without thought, "He needs me."

"Then you are welcome."

'Come closer and be homeward bound,'

The voice no longer sounded like my own, taking on a more ethereal sound as darker tones rumbled through the simple sentence. The person that the voice belonged to was someone that I should not upset; someone that relied on me to do something important.

A wave of warmth enveloped my mind and body, my skin feeling hot and feverish as I felt something just as hot along my back. Another ripple of heat caressed my mind and I opened my mouth to protest, finding my voice smothered by something soft as my heart thrummed with ecstasy and elation knowing that the important person was close by.

'You are home.'

No...

No, I wasn't.

'

You

ARE

home.'

Another tender wave of warmth rushed over my body, reaching deep through my skin and brushing against my mind as I forgot why I was against this feeling.

"Such a simple thing...and yet you found the strength to leave me."

I opened my eyes slowly, finding my vision enraptured by a single green eye as the slitted black pupil contracted when it registered my focus.

"I didn't mean to..." The words left my lips in a whine as my skin grew hotter still, the air blowing softly against my back and waist as I stared into the floating eye.

"You are home...you are mine."

"As you say--" I had meant to say more before the eye closed, the inky black lids shutting over the brilliant green color and revealing the mass of writhing dark tentacles surrounding the lone orb.

No...there was more to this thing, but I found myself fighting off a sudden headache when I tried to look at it closer. I could've sworn there was a humanoid shape hidden underneath the large eye, the appearance taking on the structure of a male.

"(Y/n), are you feeling well?" My mother leaned down over my shoulder with a partially worried look on her face, "You've been staring at my cooking like its offended you somehow."

"

Mama

, I'm sorry," I snapped back to attention, instantly digging into her cooking and enjoying its flavors, "I must not have slept well last night."

"As long as you arrived safely, that's all that matters."

"Well, no worries. I'm home and am bound to stay here until further notice," The smile on my lips faded quickly as the long-forgotten words emerged in my mind.

'Be homeward bound.'

"Just remember the rules from your childhood," My father spoke up from across the table, "Stay away from that mountain..."

"I know it's a cursed place,

vati

. I've stayed away since I came back last night."

Did I?

"I'm happy that you've returned home," He huffed with affirmation.

"...as am I. I won't leave again," The smile returned on my face as a flash of green caught my focus from the corner of my eye, an overwhelming feeling of belonging flooding my senses, "I promise."

Choromatsu x BasketballCaptain!Reader

Inspired by MatryoshkaVerde's prompt.

Clang!

Another homerun by the fifth sextuplet, drawing an exclamation of joy from the uniformed brother while a bystander merely sat with a book nearly pressed to his face, his right leg crossed over the left while he tried to lean back against the metal bench behind him.

Clang!

For the seventh time, the metallic ring of the baseball bat sang out despite the wooden material it was made from.

Clang!

"Home run!" The fifth sextuplet shouted through his laughter.

"Haven't you done enough?" The bystander sighed out as he turned a page in his novel, briefly glancing up at the player.

"Never enough! I need to do a thousand more!"

"We'll miss dinner if you need to score that many."

Another page turn.

Clang!

"It's your fault for not wanting to be my bat weight."

"I refuse to submit to that kind of torture, Jyushimatsu. It's a miracle that Ichimatsu is able to withstand it."

Clang!

"You're just scared, Choromatsu," Jyushimatsu laughed out as he launched another ball up into the air before hitting it with the bat at full force.

Clang!

"Of course I am," The man gave another heavy sigh before lowering the book, "I'm going home. Don't do another thousand or Osomatsu will eat your food."

"Haha! Okay!"

Clang!

The repetitive sounds sent Choromatsu on his way, tucking the book underneath his arm as he moved past the baseball field, the sounds of his brother's laughter dying with the distance. Other sounds replaced it: skateboards grinding against metal poles before hitting the concrete, inflated balls slapping against the ground before shouts of dismay or happiness filled the silence between, shoes hitting the grassy fields while passing a soccer ball between them.

Choromatsu

hated

the park.

It wasn't because of anything that was going on, but he knew that his time would be better spent looking for a job or finding hints and tips to secure an interview.

His gaze lowered to the book cradled underneath his arm as a frown pulled at his lips.

It was just an excuse just like everything else that he had been trying to work towards.

Choromatsu loved being a NEET, but hated the public opinion that title held.

"Watch it!"

The warning made him look up before a basketball hit the ground where he was about to step, causing him to jump back in shock.

"Shit, I'm sorry!" The same voice called out, drawing his attention towards one of the caged basketball half-courts. A woman about his age had her fingers around some of the fence links while looking at him, her colored hues catching his attention before her unnatural hair color drew his intrigue.

Green. Her entire head of hair had been dyed various shades of green that somehow looked beautiful on her.

"...do you mind?" She called out.

"Oh...sorry," He snapped out of his reverie before collecting the rogue basketball, tossing it up over the fence back to her side, "Thanks for the warning."

"It's my fault for thinking that I had the right angle," She easily chased down the throw and dribbled it back to the fenceline, looking back to Choromatsu, "Do you come here often?"

"Not very...but I never really have any reason to."

"Wanna throw some?" She held the ball in her left hand, raising an eyebrow with the offer.

"I...I'm better at watching," Choromatsu fought down a blush as he tried to hide the book away from her line of sight, "Not much of a player."

"Okay," She began bouncing the ball again, "You seemed to have a pretty good throw, so I thought you played."

'

That was just luck

,' He thought to himself before looking back at her, "I mean...I haven't played in a while, so I can try."

The woman waited patiently as Choromatsu scrambled to open the latched door, his palms suddenly accumulating sweat before he set the book down near the door gently.

"Think fast."

The words drew his attention before he quickly turned himself around to catch the basketball she had thrown towards him, grabbing it firmly after a few bounces within his hands. He looked back to the woman to see her holding a second basketball, spinning it on her index finger for a second before palming it.

"Nice," The smile she offered made his heart skip a beat or two, "Wanna play a small game of points?"

Choromatsu huffed as the basketball rebounded back to him from the fence, picking it up quickly and moving back to where the woman had been standing.

(Y/n)

. Her first name was (y/n).

"You know that you don't need to shoot wherever I am, right?" She laughed while taking a few steps back from the freethrow line, watching with some interest as Choromatsu aligned himself up for another shot.

"I wanna find out the answer," He tried to laugh through the pain that his arms were feeling, running calculations through his head before launching the ball into an arch that soared through the air, firmly hitting the metal hoop rim and wedging between it and the backboard, "Ah, damn it!"

(Y/n) whistled in an impressed tone, walking towards the board and holding her own basketball in one hand, "I'd say that gets an answer from me. You wanted to know why my hair is green?"

He only nodded as he furiously swallowed, his nerves yelling at him to run from her for damaging her property.

"It was a dare," She stood underneath the stuck ball and jumped up, slamming her ball against the wedged one and forcing it out of position, "My teammates dared me to color my hair our uniform color if we won the local tournament. Needless to say, we got first place."

"You play on a team?"

"Technically, I'm the captain," The sway of her green hair caught Choromatsu's eyes, the scenery changing from the half-court in the park to a women's basketball team playing an intense game. He could visualize (y/n) shouting out directions and even playing the game alongside her teammates before he blinked, snapping his attention back to the present, "We're not a celebrity team or anything, just a bunch of women who play in the district."

"That's still pretty impressive," He smiled, feeling his cheeks flush at the thought of attending a game, "I just played with some neighborhood kids when I was younger..."

"You still have a good arm," (Y/n) tossed the unstuck ball back to him, "Wanna go another round?"

"Eh...no, I need to get home," Choromatsu passed the ball back to her, quickly gathering his discarded book and leaving the court, "I'll be back later in the week, though."

"Sounds good," She offered a gentle smile as she caught the ball, picking it up and resting it on her hip.

"Professor Dekapan!" Choromatsu shouted the scientist's name as he shoved the front doors wide open, completely exposing the interior of the lab, "I need something that can enhance physical strength!"

The sudden demand and shout caused a half-dressed rotund man to jump in surprise, his verbal tic sounding out as he tried to catch several vials that had been thrown into the air by the intrusion. Some of them shattered onto the ground, the others caught by the scientist before being placed back into their standing rack, a deep sigh of relief whistling between his lips.

"Why on earth would you need something like that?" Dekapan reached up and scratched at his bald head, the curly mustache twitching just underneath his nose as he looked towards Choromatsu, "You're not trying to beat your personal record again, are you?"

"Wha--No!" Choromatsu shook his head furiously while fighting down a blush from spreading across his cheeks, "No, I need to impress someone who plays a sport!"

"Oh-hoh!" The scientist exclaimed before turning towards a large bookcase that was overstuffed with books, vials, and other miscellaneous objects that had no reason to be there, "If you want to show off for an athlete, then you'll...need...

this

!"

With the last word, he pulled a small vial from the very back of the bookshelf it was on, yanking out the volumes of tomes and sending them tumbling to the floor without caution. The vial held a bright green paste of sorts, the thick liquid clinging to the sides of the glass tube while Dekapan brought it over to Choromatsu.

"It's a strength enhancer of sorts, but use this carefully!" His words of warning went over the man's head as he grabbed the vial, Choromatsu lost in his own imagination, "I would advise against any contact sport as you could rip apart the other person without flexing more than a pinky."

"Yeah, yeah," Choromatsu slipped the given vial into his pants pocket before giving the rotund man a farewell wave, "I'll be careful."

"Remember -- no contact sports!"

Choromatsu steeled himself as he walked back to the park, reaching down to his pocket and gently patting the vial that had stayed in his pocket for the week.

Throughout the previous days, he had gone with Jyushimatsu and Ichimatsu for the fifth brother's baseball practice, keeping an eye out on the basketball half-courts for (y/n). When questioned why he even bothered going, the excuse was he needed sunshine to remain healthy.

"That still doesn't explain why

you

want to come," Ichimatsu huffed in disapproval as the trio walked past the courts, his hands tucked deep into the sweatshirt's front pocket, "...you hate the park."

"I'd rather be here than betting on horses with Karamatsu and Osomatsu, and Todomatsu has work," Choromatsu leveled an emotionless stare at the glaring brother, "Besides, it's not like I've ever gotten in the way."

"It's a brotherly outing!" Jyushimatsu shouted as his arms swung wide, each hand holding a baseball bat or a basket of balls.

With Jyushimatsu claiming one of the baseball fields, Ichimatsu and Choromatsu sat in the neighboring stands and watched as he began his exercises, one watching with a blank stare while the other kept his nose to his book.

"Oh, there you are."

A new voice caught the attention of the three men, drawing their focus from their various activities to see a woman with vibrant green hair standing near the stands, her attention glued to Choromatsu.

Ichimatsu and Jyushimatsu stiffened in shock as Choromatsu's mouth partially opened in surprise that (y/n) had narrowed in on him so

quickly

.

"You missed practice yesterday," (Y/n) offered a smile, slinging the heavy-looking bag over her shoulder as she adjusted her stance, "Want to shoot some hoops today?"

"Uh, I think you have the wrong guy," Choromatsu quickly stood up and shoved the book underneath his arm as he jumped down from his seat in the stands, panic racing through his system as he felt the waves of jealousy cascading off of his brothers, "I don't know you."

"You are Choromatsu, aren't you?" She raised an eyebrow in confusion, "You look like him."

"Fappymatsu--" Ichimatsu growled from the stands, a chill racing down Choromatsu's spine as he grew more rigid, "Do you know this

girl

?"

"Big brother--" Jyushimatsu's voice teased out with just as much threat.

"Please-let-me-escort-you-out-of-here!" Choromatsu rushed his response as he pushed (y/n) away from the baseball field, not letting go of her shoulders until they arrived at an empty basketball court.

"What the hell!" She exclaimed before pushing his hands off of her, "Choromatsu, what's going on?"

"You...picked the absolute

worst

time to show up..." He panted while casting a worried glance over his shoulder, unsure if the other two had followed him, "My brothers...they don't like girls who aren't with them."

"Why? Are they jealous of you?" (Y/n)'s voice dipped with a tease before the metal gate opened to the court, "Well, it's not like they have anything to worry about."

"...thanks..."

"You're the one that challenged me to a rematch," Choromatsu heard a basketball head towards him from the bounces on the concrete, "So don't try to run away now."

"I wouldn't dream of missing the shock on your face when you lose," He caught the ball and dribbled it a few times while he fished out the vial from his pocket, downing the contents quickly while (y/n) had her back turned, "I've got some practice in."

"Oh, so

now

you're talking a big game?" She tied her hair up into a ponytail, pulling the green strands away from her face as she looked towards him, "Prove it."

Choromatsu was

right there

. He was three points away from winning the shoot-out game, and he'd win the knowledge of (y/n)'s

personal cellphone number

.

The problem was that the strength-enhancing drink was proving

too

effective.

He merely flicked his wrist and the ball had landed squarely into the net, and the force of the ball when he dribbled it was becoming out of control. There were signs of cracks in the concrete from where he had 'gently' bounced it a few times.

His tongue swiped over his upper lip nervously as sweat began to pour down his face, lining himself up for a shot along the three-point line. (Y/n) stood next to him as he cautiously took the ball in his hands, suddenly hyperaware of her presence.

One last shot.

That's all he needed.

The

second

problem was the death glares that he was getting from his two brothers that were watching from the bushes nearby.

Choromatsu could feel the daggers in his back already, stifling a shudder before refocusing on the net.

"Don't mess up," (Y/n) called out as Choromatsu released his throw, losing all restraint and

launching

the basketball up into orbit.

She stared up at the fading pinprick in shock.

He stared in fear at her reaction.

His brothers stared in horror at the event.

"What..."

"I-can-explain!" Choromatsu shouted quickly as he took a few steps away, holding up his hands in surrender.

"How did you do that?!" (Y/n) looked back at him, the shock still prevalent on her face.

"I'm sorry!" He shouted back in tears.

"No, no! Don't be sorry!" She shoved her ball towards him, "Do it again!"

"...what."

"Well, I mean I'm mad that you lost one of my balls, but I'm more amazed at how much strength you have!" Her focus switched back to where the ball had been launched to, "Do you think you hit the ISS?"

"I lost your property...and you want me to throw another one?" Choromatsu was at a loss for words.

"Pfft. It's only ¥2000 or so," She shrugged before bringing her hand up to her chin, "It was my personal belonging, though, so I can't really petition the district to replace it...Maybe I shouldn't have you throw my other one..."

Choromatsu stared at (y/n) with a slack jaw, "I don't think I've ever been in this situation before...but I'm pretty positive that you're having the wrong reaction."

"I can yell at you if you'd rather have that happen," (Y/n) set the remaining basketball down next to her bag, glancing back at him, "Or were you wanting more of a 'gag' reaction?"

"I...don't know what I was expecting, but it wasn't this."

"You're talking to a woman who voluntarily dyed her hair green for the sake of getting her team to win a basketball tournament," She turned to fully look at Choromatsu, "I'm not going to react in a predictable way."

Choromatsu rubbed the back of his head, his eyes widening as an idea struck him.

"Does that mean I get your number?"

"I didn't see the ball enter the net, so no."

A swish of netting sounded out next to the pair before an explosion went off, pelting the pair with harsh winds and concrete debris, drawing a cry from both of them.

The dust settled slowly as (y/n) coughed harshly, "Choromatsu, are you okay?"

"Yeah, I'm fine," He responded as the wind began to shove the dust cloud away from the now destroyed basketball court, "Are you?"

"Peachy-keen, but I don't think the court can respond the same...are you fucking me?"

The sudden swear drew Choromatsu's attention, seeing a dust-covered (y/n) staring slack-jawed at where the basketball net had been standing.

The net had disintegrated with the remains of an orange basketball completely deflated underneath it at the middle of the crater, scorch marks blazing the basketball's trail through the net.

"...does

that

mean I get your number?"

(Y/n) scoffed a little as she rested a hand on her hip, "Yeah...I'll count that."

MagicalGirl/Darkness!Choromatsu x Reader

Inspired by shimmering_clouds's prompt.

Choromatsu sighed heavily, his lips parting in a mixture of anger and distaste while his fingers tensed around the thin sheets of newspaper. His dark hues lifted from the article depicting himself and two others -- two of his brothers -- as heroines that had saved a tourist group from plummeting off a cliff in a runaway bus. The brake lines had been severed intentionally, the vehicle meant to draw out a brother that hadn't shown up. It had been up to Choromatsu, Ichimatsu, and Osomatsu to save the civilians from the surprise attack from the villains.

He shoved the roughly rolled up newspaper under his right thigh, settling his brow into a glare that was aimed at his own reflection as the train he rode dipped into an underground tunnel.

He hated that his family had been cursed by magic that altered the sextuplets into females, gave them superpowers, and had changed their NEET lives forever. He hated wearing the forced outfit as the powers evolved when they became more comfortable with their control, his glare shifting into a glower as the black crop top and miniskirt flashed in his head.

Choromatsu closed his eyes when they had developed a bright red glow deep within the dark hues, letting out another sigh while letting his head fall back until he was staring at the ceiling.

A quiet touch brought his focus back to the moment, casting his softening glance towards the young woman sitting next to him with a concerned look on her features, "Babe, are you okay?"

"Yeah, fine for now," Choromatsu barely nodded, looking back at his reflection, "Just busy with thinking."

"...about what the article said?" She gently pulled the newspaper article from across his lap, smoothing out the creases that he had caused, "I thought that Heroines Party were the good guys?"

Guilt seared through his heart, wanting sorely to tell her everything but withholding any external reaction, "It's just a ploy to keep the public distracted."

"Distracted from what?"

"Anything. The 'attacks' are probably staged."

A defeated hum vibrated behind her lips, momentarily distracted by the automated voice announcing the train approaching a station. She folded up the article carefully, slipping it into her purse before resting her hand on his, "Come on...this is our stop."

Choromatsu willfully followed her lead, keeping close to her as the crowd thrummed around them until they stepped from the main street onto a small footpath that led up to a smaller street. His heart pounded happily as her grip tightened a little around his hand, his eyes catching her own as she looked behind her. The smile they shared was heartwarming.

Choromatsu wouldn't trade his girlfriend for anyone in the world.

(Y/n) had been an unexpected discovery when he waited within an office building for a job interview, her words a kind encouragement that gave him the stability he needed to nail the interview. Choromatsu confessed his feelings after a few months of growing what he thought was a close friendship, keeping his Magical Girl side a close secret throughout their rocky relationship. She had been very forgiving when he stepped over her boundaries, offering an alternative that would make both parties at ease.

He had learned about healthy relationships through her, ultimately shoving aside all of the pornographic scenarios he had hoped to act out with (y/n)

when she ran from him crying.

Now, his heart swelled with pride as he looked towards his girlfriend of five years.

"About the article," She spoke, catching his attention as she barely looked back at him, "I...actually like reading about the group."

Choromatsu's mind stopped working, his body numbly following her lead. He didn't want her to talk further; he

couldn't

let her speak about this more. Not about that embarrassing curse plaguing his family.

"Of the six, I really like Liber--"

His eyes widened as his brain snapped to attention, his hues shifting into a glare while his lips pulled back in a snarl.

"Shut up about them, okay?" The demand was louder than he intended, but the adrenaline had a firm grip on his throat, "Those people are just there for entertainment! They do nothing to help society except these 'heroic acts' that only cause harm for those in the field!"

(Y/n) recoiled from his touch, her hand falling from his as they stopped on the pathway leading to their house. Her colored eyes were wide with tears starting to dance along her bottom lashes.

"I don't understand why you're so obsessed with them, okay?" Choromatsu tore his gaze from her, clenching a fist and bringing it up to his forehead while he turned his head away, "Fake heroics begets real trauma. Besides, you never see them. Why would you

want

to see them if it means being shoved into danger?

I

will keep you safe! Always have since we started dating! You only need

me

, okay? Not some

girl

traipsing around in such provocative clothing."

He knew he crossed the line -- vaulted over it, even -- but he couldn't stop himself.

"Face it, (y/n). The only 'hero' you'll ever have is me, and I'm a pretty shitty one," Choromatsu walked towards the house, his long stride leaving his tearful girlfriend behind as he slammed the door wide open, "Now, get in. Your leftovers from yesterday will suffice for dinner."

I called off work for the rest of the week, staying sequestered in my room with my futon serving as my safe place.

Never in the five years I had been with Choromatsu had I seen him

that

angry, unsure if I should confront or apologize to him...

While he was the one at fault for taking the topic too far, I felt partially responsible this time as I had

wanted

to talk about Heroines Party. I didn't keep close tabs on them, but when I read of the Magical Girl called 'Liberty' saving someone, I had developed a fantasy of her saving me from a dangerous scenario...but Choromatsu was

right: while the idea itself was entertaining, it would never happen because he was always vigilant when we were out in public.

I had nothing to fear when he was walking next to me...except himself.

It's not like anything had really changed about Choromatsu since I started dating him; he had always warned me about his outburst tendencies, and he was always certain to apologize for them afterwards. I had suggested either him or both of us attending a therapist to help work through some triggering issues, but he brushed the suggestion aside while stating it was only stress.

I didn't know what stress he was experiencing. At work, he was always on top of his game and filed various project outlines early after triple-checking everything for incorrections; at home, he would laze about and watch television until dinner was ready, and then read romantic light novels well past when I fell asleep.

The front door opened and closed, the muted footsteps heard outside my window as Choromatsu traveled to work.

I slowly pulled myself from the grasping clutches of the duvet cover, slowly gathering some clean clothes and bath accessories with the intention of heading to the public baths (since our house didn't have the full commodities). I didn't care if I was a mess; no one needed to pry into my life at the moment and the only person I really cared for had left me alone since yelling at me.

Choromatsu could see her head dip down after recognizing the restaurant that he had brought (y/n) to, knew that she understood what it meant from him, and could only hope that this mask of 'normalcy' stayed strong during the date. He had clocked in extra hours at work, stayed out much later than normal with his brothers during patrols, ensured that (y/n) was safe at home before going to bed himself.

He was so tired...

With a gentle gesture, Choromatsu led (y/n) into the restaurant and verified the reservation that he had made, specifically asking for a private room just for the two of them so they could eat and drink in moderate peace.

He had an apology letter written out, folded up and safely tucked inside his interior coat pocket. He knew her favorite food at the restaurant, ordering it for her when she remained silent and asked for her favorite non-alcoholic drink to go with it.

It was a ritual he hated having.

Not for the action of doing it, but for the reason of it existing in the first place.

If he had enough spine to confess that he

was

one of the 'Heroine Party' that protected the city, confess that he switched genders in order to harness the massive power that his superhero alter ego controlled, confess that the outfits his alter ego wore were borderline disgusting in his eyes.

Choromatsu remained silent until the food arrived, (y/n) keeping her head down and numbly fidgeting with her fingernail beds.

His dark hues narrowed at the action, restraining himself from commenting on the self-harming action.

Anything he said at this point would drive the wedge between them even further into the ground.

The waiter came with the food, pardoning himself after setting everything down and closed the sliding door behind him.

Choromatsu gingerly took the first bite of chicken, a silent sign that (y/n) could start eating too. Once he swallowed the mouthful, Choromatsu set down his fork.

"Don't stop eating, (y/n)...all I ask in return is that you listen to me."

Her colored hues snapped up to him, pupils shrinking within the once bright and wondrous color like a prey waiting to be devoured.

He cleared his throat as he took out the paper, unfolding it and holding it over his plate with trembling hands, "(Y/n), there are no words that can be said to explain away everything that's happened the past week. I spoke out of turn and in anger on the train, you were hurt by what I said and grew fearful of me in ways that I grew to hate. You shouldn't be the one at home, cowering in worry while waiting for me to come home. You shouldn't--"

'"

Cowering

'?" (Y/n)'s interruption startled Choromatsu, drawing his gaze from the letter to her stormy eyes that barely hid a fury deep within, "You...insinuate that I'm...a coward?"

His eyes hooded and fell to his lap, holding his tongue while she spoke her piece.

"For an apology, it's a rather poor one," She set her fork down as the chair she sat on squeaked a little. Choromatsu could see her leaning over the table in his minds' eye, "I have been more than forgiving for all of the shit that you've put me through. I have been beaten down verbally and emotionally by your words and actions, my own dreams and desires pushed to the side because

you

were the one that was fearful of what I could do. All I've ever wanted was to return to university, to finish that engineering degree, and find a career that I could fall in love with!"

Choromatsu's thoughts turned towards the scam of a university that (y/n) had tried to apply to, finding out with his brothers that new applicants were

subjected to experiments carried out by two of the main villains and recreated into supersoldiers that could only survive a week at most.

"I had wanted to try and start a family with you, and you just smacked down my proposal of going with an in vivo fertilization company..."

Once more, he remembered viciously burning down the lab with his brothers after discovering inhuman experimentations being implanted unknowingly into women that were desiring children. (Y/n) was to be their next victim before he scrubbed her name from their records.

"I just..." (Y/n) hiccuped as a sob cut off her sentence, "Why is this relationship all about you? Why can't I be my own person...?"

Choromatsu let her crying fill the silence, tears pricking under his own eyelids. There wasn't anything he could say to make her feel secure--

A green glow fluttered to life from his waist, his eyes growing wide before snapping his head up in full alert. (Y/n) had her hands cupping over her face as she hung her head low, unaware of the sudden change in his posture.

The glow from the gem hidden underneath his belt only meant one thing -- a villain was nearby and one of his brothers had called for help.

Choromatsu silently cursed the ill-timed event before his gaze rose once more to (y/n)'s sobbing form. She was his priority in this moment, the gem indicating that he needed to get (y/n) to safety before he could think of helping whomever made the call. It was selfish, but he needed to be. (Y/n)'s mental stability couldn't handle Choromatsu brushing off her plight that he himself had caused.

Gently reaching across the table, the pads of his fingers brushed against the back of her right hand before sweeping around to hold her hand in his, " (Y/n), I did not mean to belittle your character nor insult your strong capability in life."

As her tearful eyes lifted up to meet his dark hues, Choromatsu prayed hard that the napkin pressed tightly over his waist was enough to smother the

pulsating glow.

"I want to see you succeed in life, to see you achieve the dreams that you have for yourself. I'll stand behind you the whole way," He could feel his neutral mask falter as the gem became hotter, the little beacon protesting his feigned ignorance of its silent cry, "You want to go to school to finish your degree? Just don't go to

that

university. You want to start a family? We'll find another program where you can carry the baby to full term since I suffer from azoospermia"

His words ensnared her focus, her eyes widening slightly at each spoken word.

"I went about everything wrong. I should've given you alternatives to where you wanted to go instead of just shutting you down," Choromatsu closed his eyes in a wince of pain, his other hand pressing harder on the napkin in an effort to squash the insistent gem, "I'm sorry, (y/n)--"

A loud crash cut Choromatsu off, chunks of brick and mortar flying into the private room as he launched towards (y/n) from around the table and enveloped her between his arms, the momentum of the leap sending them both towards the far wall while he turned to take the impact with his back.

A feminine figure with white hair scrambled up from the settling dust and debris, barely standing up before someone walked through the new gaping hole in the wall, a metallic 'clang' ringing out before the female screamed in pain and fell back to the ground.

The dust settled further to reveal the Magical Girl 'Noisy Sonata Cupid' -- Karamatsu's female form -- struggling to sit up while a sheet of ridged white stuck out from her left shoulder, the flared pauldron nearly severed from the outfit as blood streamed down the right side of her face onto her chest. The black colored clothes could barely hide the deep crimson hue of fresh blood.

Choromatsu could feel (y/n) freeze up in his arms after she glanced over her shoulder, thankfully not letting out a single sound since the intrusion. He didn't miss the shocked glance that Karamatsu had given him when the dust fell, the expression full of understanding while still holding a silent plea.

The new intruder laughed mockingly, waving the remaining dust away with his white longcoat tails while adjusting the deep purple scarf hanging around his neck. The shoe heels clicked against the rubble before he stepped onto the carpet, "What a place to serve as your grave. Such a wonderful restaurant, if I remember the ratings."

Choromatsu's blood chilled as the man's dark gaze swept towards the couple, turning his face away while recognition flashed on his expression. (Y/n)'s eyes widened in fear, pressing herself as close as she could against his body.

"It also looks like we have witnesses to proclaim your defeat! Uh-huehue..."

"Don't!" Cupid shouted, her voice filled with strain as she struggled to stand up, "They're innocent, Dr. Sheh!"

"You should know by now that no one is truly innocent, Cupid," Dr. Sheh laughed, his footfalls marking his distance closing in. Choromatsu clutched (y/n) to him as tightly as he dared, his nostrils flaring as only one thing settled in his mind.

He

had

to expose himself.

"(Y/n), I love you. Never forget that."

The fear in her expression was barely overtaken by confusion before he pressed his lips against hers, pulling away and releasing his hold on her as Choromatsu finally allowed the gem's magic to take over while rising to his feet.

He could feel his very bones shift and shrink, withholding any sounds of discomfort while his manhood completely retreated into his own skin as his chest filled out and his waist slimmed down. The nice outfit he had chosen for the apology date became saturated with the magic leaking from his body, darkening the dark blue to black, shades of dark gray, and hints of a deep green color while the seams became undone and fastened once more once they held a different shape. Choromatsu felt the shirt's collar tighten around his throat while straps of cloth snaked over his collarbone before attached to the now strapless top, the ends cinching just over his breasts and tying into a feminine bow that only served to pronounce his bust. The pants shredded themselves around his lower legs, tightening around his calves while the remaining fabric stitched itself together into a skirt with a slit that showed off his upper thighs. His hair flowed like water down to his knees, some locks streaming over his chest before the dark hair color drained upwards, the brownish-black lifting from each hair and forming a knitted hat that mimicked the top of a frog's head with a pair of 'x'ed out eyes towards Choromatsu's back-right.

The outcry of shock from Dr. Sheh was the only indicator that Choromatsu got that his transformation was complete, "Not another one?!"

Cupid looked up at the newly revealed Magical Girl stupidly, her eyes flicking towards the person behind the newcomer before taking advantage of the villain's distraction, rolling onto her knees and launching at Dr. Sheh, "About time, Liberty!"

Choromatsu's left eye twitched at the name, running his -- no, her right hand through her long locks of white hair, "You're the one that ruined my apology. Couldn't hold off for another few minutes, could you?"

"...Liberty...?" The soft question of her name fell from someone's lips, the Magical Girl barely turning to see a stunned (y/n) leaning against the wall. Liberty's eyes hooded in resignation, the thick black eyeliner making the movement more pronounced as she squatted down in front of her alter ego's girlfriend, "...but you--"

Liberty pressed her index finger against (y/n)'s lips, instantly silencing her, "Answers later. For now, leave."

Without another word of warning, (y/n) crawled against the wall and scrambled through the broken sliding door while the Magical Girl turned her entire focus on the rebuilding fight behind her.

My mind was a mess of confusion and shock.

Choromatsu was Liberty?!

I pressed my back against the wall next to the sliding door, hearing shouts and cries as I could only imagine the two Magical Girls engaging the villain called Dr. Sheh, pressing my hands to my face while I was torn between completely fleeing the scene and wanting to stay close by to witness what my boyfriend was capable of.

He told me to leave; I wanted to stay.

...so I'd stay behind cover. I wasn't dumb enough to watch Choromatsu -- er, Liberty in action while standing out in the open.

I had seen everything that had happened to Choromatsu as he physically changed into the Magical Girl 'Liberty', heard the sickening crunch as his body practically rippled with an unseen force before it had rearranged into a more feminine figure behind the screen of light, watched helplessly as his hands trembled when 'he' had become a 'she'.

The anger towards Heroine's Party suddenly made sense, the sudden outburst of fury when I had mentioned

his

alter ego, the deep sadness in his eyes when Choromatsu had looked away from me on the train earlier last week.

Choromatsu

hated

that this happened to him, probably loathed that he couldn't remain himself when saving people.

Flashes of emerald green and royal blue streaked out from behind the crumbling wall of the restaurant, my hands clamped over my ears as I tried to muffle shouts, screams of frustration and pain, jeering taunts that were abruptly smothered by other noises. The green slowly overtook the blue in ferocity as time seemed to drag its feet, one such blast arcing close and slamming into the loose debris to my right before I pressed my back against the wall, fervently praying that nothing else came close to me.

The last thing I wanted to happen was for Liberty's own power to harm me. It would emotionally and mentally kill Choromatsu.

There was nowhere to safely crawl away from the fight raging behind the crumbling brick wall, chunks falling off when someone had been thrown into the remaining structure, a partial brick landing near my hand splayed out for support as I leaned as far as I dared to look down the wrecked hallway in an attempt to find another hiding place. Retracting my hand in shock and checking it over for damage (pleased to find none), I could only stay still before I heard a shout of displeasure.

"No! Let go!" The only man cried out, verbally straining against something that may have hindered the person.

"...not a chance, Dr. Sheh," I recognized the tired voice of Cupid, a grunt indicating she cleared her throat, "How are you doing, Liberty?"

"Fine," came the reply, the tone and speech pattern eerily close to how Choromatsu spoke, "Are you sure you can handle the rest? You'd been fighting for the better part of the night."

"Yeah, I'll be okay. Go ahead and finish what you need to do. My apologies for interrupting."

"Just...don't tell Queen Ruby, okay?" Liberty's voice was much closer, a slim hand curling around the edge of the wall before the near-monochromatic Magical Girl emerged from the battlefield, her eyes flitting

down to settle on my form, "Somehow, I knew that you'd ignore my advice."

I was at a loss for words as she ran a hand through her long pure white locks, squatting down in front of me while tucking her skirt underneath her knees. The long hair spilled from underneath her black knitted hat to splay around her like a living cloak, trailing behind her as she kneeled, "You always were a bit stubborn."

My arms reached out and curled around her neck, my body leaning forward into the sudden hug while I buried my face into the soft white hair of the Magical Girl. I could feel her form completely tense up, her shoulders stiff and back rigid as she raised her head high away from me, "...is this what you're angry about?"

"(Y/n)--" Liberty spoke my name in fearful confusion, her hands trembling as she lay them on my shoulders.

"Please, Choromatsu," I pulled from the hug enough to look at her in the eyes, the dark color I had grown used to surrounding a vivid red deep within the irises, "Is this what you were hoping to keep from me?"

Liberty lowered her gaze, tilting her head forward until our foreheads were touching, "...yes."

A shudder ripped through her frame, thick tears falling onto her legs.

"How could anyone love someone like me? A man who becomes a woman to fight against people that wish to do harm," Her eyes lifted back to my softening gaze, the tears dragging down the black makeup hugging her eyelids onto her cheeks, "I

hate

this form; I

hate

that this has to happen...!"

I lifted a hand from her back to her left cheek, my thumb wiping away some of the tears and smearing the makeup more as my brow creased in sympathetic sorrow.

"The reason why I've been harsh...the reason why I've been smothering you -- all of it is because of what I've seen. The university you wished to attend was turning their accepted students into monstrous supersoldiers bred and trained to fight Heroine's Party, the in vivo program you wanted to use would impregnate you with a humanoid amalgamation in hopes to use your body as a living incubation unit for their experiment," My eyes slowly widened as Liberty divulged the reasons behind Choromatsu's disagreement towards what I had wanted to do, "I...I should've been truthful about why, but I couldn't find the courage to do so. I just wanted to keep you safe..."

Liberty leaned more into me, her hands now clutching onto the back of my clothing as the same light from before smothered her figure from sight, stilling in fear of interrupting the process as I

felt

every physical shift that happened: Liberty's bust slimming into masculine pectoral muscles, her hair withdrawing into her skull as her shoulders broadened just a little.

When the light faded, Choromatsu was the one left crying with the same expression that Liberty held, his hands holding me closer like I was a lifeline.

"I tried to be strong for you...without showing you what I really was."

"Were you scared that I would run away? That I would despise you for turning into a woman to keep people safe?" I felt his head nod as another sobbing fit wracked his body. I lowered my eyes when my boyfriend placed his head against my shoulder, uncertain if what I was about to say would shove us away from each other, "...I was more terrified of you...as Choromatsu."

He completely froze.

"Your words...hurt me more than finding out about your superhero alias. It was devastating to hear that I couldn't follow my dreams, to listen to you disparage my hopes while I struggled to find something good in our relationship," I close my eyes tightly while balling up my fists now in my lap, "After this date...I was going to call this relationship off."

Choromatsu remained silent while his clothing betrayed his movement. He had shifted to look up at me, I thought.

"I had given you five years of my life, tolerated every wrong move you made, and tried to encourage you to be an equal partner in this relationship..." I bit my bottom lip harshly before continuing, "The argument you had been trying to apologize for shouldn't have happened."

"Do you...still feel that way? That we can't work on us anymore?"

I heard the deep guilt buried in Choromatsu's voice, feeling the trembling partially worsen as he released his hold on my clothing to rest his hands on my shoulders from what felt like a sitting position, "I don't know."

"Is...is there any chance that I have?"

I slowly opened my eyes to see Choromatsu meeting my hues from underneath a torrent of tears rolling down his cheeks, realization resting on his features for a moment before guilt squashed it while he completely released me from his touch, his hands curling up and resting on his knees.

He looked like a miserable man, his secret exposed and his soul left bare to the answer he desperately searched for but wasn't sure if he wanted to hear it.

"Was this the only thing you hid from me?" I searched his eyes as I questioned, the sorrow appearing genuine as he solemnly nodded.

Five years. It was long enough to start questioning if it was worth every moment to stay with Choromatsu, yet short enough to still leave without regret.

He had attempted to perform perverse and raunchy acts on me early on, profusely apologizing when I verbally fought back against the unwanted actions. He supported me in smaller aspects throughout the relationship that I couldn't count. He had shown that he could learn what I wanted from a safe and healthy relationship, ensuring that anything romantic or sexual was done at my pace.

The good I could see in our relationship far outweighed the negative...but the negative was gigantic: lying.

It ultimately boiled down to him lying to me about this. Everything he had done in retaliation I could excuse to fear, but it didn't erase the fact that he still shouted at me, still berated me for even thinking about the group of Magical Girls he was a part of.

My lips thinned into a slim line as I thought.

Could this problem be fixed?

Choromatsu didn't move a muscle while I became lost in thoughts, his whole attention fixated on me.

"...one more time," I took a breath before resetting my posture to look directly at Choromatsu, "If you yell at me one more time about

anything

, I won't come back."

The joy and relief flooding his face was pure, the fear dropping away as his brow lifted in a mix of surprise. His hands reached towards me and cupped my cheeks as he leaned in, pressing his forehead to mine, "(Y/n), there's nothing to yell at you about...not anymore. I love you and want only the best for you."

Tears fell from our eyes as he pushed his lips against mine, kissing me deeply and fervently while his hands traveled past my face towards my

back. I leaned into the kiss, my heart feeling lighter as Choromatsu made his passions known through the kiss.

There was no sensation of fear or doubt from him.

We both understood that it would be an uphill battle for him and he was willing to accept that challenge with every fiber of his being, including his alter ego of Liberty.

--Mature-- Beta!Choromatsu x Omega!Reader x Alpha!Osomatsu

WARNING! This is a mature chapter, and meant for an 18+ audience. If you're younger than that, I respectfully ask you find something else to read.

If you're older than 18, you may continue at your own discretion.

This story contains sexual scenes (male on female on male).

My boyfriend pulled me through the crowd quickly and quietly, my feet dragging underneath me as another shudder tore through my body, the unexpected heat pooling between my legs aching to be addressed. A mutter of swears left his lips before his grip lifted from my hand to my forearm, dragging me along more quickly before he pressed me against a cool wall.

A whine pulled itself from my lips as the bricks rubbed against my back, the man's grip against my shoulder so that I couldn't fall down or wander off towards the overpowering scents wafting down the nearby sidewalk. The inner seam of my black jeans pressed gently against my slick folds through my panties, drawing another needy whine from me as I fought to keep my hands away from that area.

This morning, I woke up as a Beta.

Five minutes ago, my body decided to present in the middle of a busy shopping mall as an Omega, immediately shifting into my first heat while my head had no time to process what just happened.

My mind flooded with wants and desires, lewd demands that I could never utter in public. I only stared at the Beta male in front of me, pressing close to my confused body like a shield from the non-mated Alphas that walked

by every so often. My hooded eyes met his worried dark hues and, for a brief moment, we both wanted to start the day over.

The green cell phone in his other hand was pressed to his ear, the dial tone echoing from the speaker like a death knell.

"Choro--" I leaned forward, fully intending to lean my head against his shoulder for some kind of comfort. My hormone-induced brain shoved my chest upwards as my core settled against Choromatsu's left leg, the limb angled towards the wall to keep me from moving. The pressure sent waves of pleasure up my spine as I smothered my mouth, desperate to not draw any more attention than the occasional glances of passerby.

He looked down at me with worry filling his eyes, removing his knee from my groin and dragging me further from the busy mall strip.

"

Matsuno residen-

"

"Ichimatsu! I need your help," He breathed into the phone receiver, snaking through the alley into a more empty road. Clicking his tongue against his cheek, Choromatsu held onto my wrist and led the way back to his house.

"

Eh? What do you need my help for?

" I could barely hear the younger brother drone on, sounding either bored or tired.

"It's (y/n)...she just presented as an Omega!"

There was silence on the other line.

"Totty has his job and I don't want to bother Mom with this. Please, you have to help her!"

"

... fine

," Ichimatsu groaned, "

Bring her over and I'll walk her through everything she needs--

"

"Are Osomatsu and Karamatsu there?" Panic hit Choromatsu's voice as he quickly asked the question.

"

...Osomatsu is. Why? She should be--

"

"Give him my spare savings box and force him out. (Y/n) presented in heat."

"

...shit...

"

The line clicked dead and Choromatsu looked back towards me, gritting his teeth and tucking his free arm underneath my knees when he noticed that I was close to collapsing. The sudden movement caused a whimper to bubble up from my throat, both of my hands clasped over my mouth and nose to try and keep out any triggering smells. Feeling the side of my waist press against Choromatsu with each stride he took, I tried to keep as still as I could as his familiar apple and pear scent became more and more clouded.

Something soft was pressed to my back

...maybe I was being laid down?

Thoughts tumbled through my head before I felt two hands trace over the skin on my sides, wordlessly whining as I arched my back in response, feeling the fabric of my shirt slide up with the warm hands. The sensation sent sparks up my spine, the fingers curling down and dipping into the small of my back as I opened my mouth in pleasant surprise.

A pair of lips crashed into mine, suddenly aware of two bodies pressed on either side of me. One set of arms pulled me towards the right with the body on the left rubbing my back before dipping down the curves of my butt and loosening the constricting pants. With my mouth fully occupied by someone's tongue playing with mine, I could only moan into whoever was kissing me.

Apple and pear...Catnip and tuna...

The smells mixed in my head, a small part of my brain still trying to figure out what was going on while the majority of my body demanded release from whatever the fuck I was going through.

The hands that graciously freed my heated core from its denim prison continued to rub large circles inside my upper thighs and I obliged by opening my legs. Instead of the hands that I had wanted to slip in, I felt my legs spread wider as something large was wedged between them. My sensitive mound sparked and cried out for more as I felt something wiry rub against it, the arms partially pulling me up into a seated position before I felt the second body move from my left side to behind me.

"Choromatsu...!" My voice didn't sound like my own, moaning into the lifted lips of the person above me. I couldn't tell if it was a cry of help or if it was a demand for pleasure.

I didn't care.

My body shuddered as I felt a bulbous object slip into my slick folds, a mewl falling from my lips as it pushed in deeper, each slight movement drawing a pathetic sounding whine. The person behind me lifted off the

shirt and loosened bra I didn't realize I was still wearing, their clothes rubbing against my bare back before their hands settled underneath my breasts. A wet and hot tongue slid across the nape of my neck, closely followed by a mirrored feeling on the other side.

"Ah...ah~!"

I cried out as my left nape was bit down on, not hard enough to break the skin but enough to send my nerves into overdrive. The other side was being licked and sucked on, the person behind me fully supporting my top weight as I melted between the two people lavishing my body with attention. The mouth moved from the left crook of my neck to my left breast, gently nipping at the sensitive bud while the hands pushed both breasts upward, tugging and teasing the unoccupied one.

"More--"

"(Y/n)...!" I heard my name whispered from the person in front, feeling their hands hook underneath my knees and push me more into the one behind me. The new position let their member hilt fully into me, the shaft wet with slick and offering lubrication as they continued to thrust into me.

A growing sensation swelled within my core, building with each thrust, pinch, and pull as it pushed me towards the edge. I hadn't felt a buildup like this before as a Beta and the wait was driving me insane, my body waiting for some kind of specific trigger before I was allowed to crest the wave.

The person behind me flinched at the same time I did, a new scent wafting into wherever we were at.

An Alpha's undeniable scent.

Cinnamon with a hint of cloves and nutmeg.

It overpowered the other two scents and my body suddenly switched from wanting Choromatsu -- whom I

knew

was right in front of me -- to wanting this new Alpha. I fought against it with every rational fiber of my being, wanting to desire my boyfriend of several years, to keep our relationship as normal as we could make it right now.

I knew that there were stories of Omegas using rental Alphas to help them through their heat, or of non-mated Alphas being an Omega's heat partner and not bonding to them. I just wanted one sexual partner but my newly budding instincts were demanding someone to be messing up my insides and it was

not

the Beta who was still on top of me.

Osomatsu stilled as he closed the front sliding door behind him, nearly staggering against it when his nose picked up several thick scents hanging in the air. The control he had on his instincts nearly snapped, the new scent of lavender intermingling with those of his younger brothers. Ichimatsu had shoved him out of the house with Choromatsu's spare wallet, demanding that he leave for a few hours. When he arrived at the pachinko parlor to see that the wallet was empty, he had thought it would be a simple dash-and-grab of Ichimatsu's private stash...

Shit...

it was definitely a mistake to come back. He should've just gone to the fishing piers and sat with Karamatsu...

The whines and whimpers upstairs were definitely (y/n)'s voice but Osomatsu couldn't pick out her faint Beta scent underneath everything else, his nose only caring about the Omega in heat upstairs.

Curious yet cautious, Osomatsu practically crawled up the stairs to the brothers' shared bedroom, the stirring in his loins becoming harder to ignore as his swelling shaft pressed against his briefs and jeans. Kneeling on the

last step, he leaned forward and peered in through the small crack between the bedroom door and the wall, his member twitching more as he recognized a partially naked Choromatsu railing against someone. The unknown person was sandwiched between him and a fully clothed Ichimatsu, who didn't appear to be bothered by the mating happening in front of him.

Osomatsu clung to the lip of the top stair, still holding onto the fraying thread of control as he heard the Omega cry out, clearly on the edge of her climax but somehow not being pushed over by Choromatsu.

It was

him!

Osomatsu's eyes widened as he took in a sharp breath of realization. If the Omega had picked up Osomatsu's scent while mating, then it was possible that

he

was the reason why they weren't climaxing. The thought was warmly accepted by his inner beast, satisfied that even while his Beta brother was on top of the Omega, they

craved

Osomatsu.

Choromatsu had sensed Osomatsu's presence when the two Omegas did, wanting the oldest Alpha to go away and allow (y/n)'s first heat to be as peaceful as it could be without interruption. His ego deflated when he heard (y/n) whimper as her inner walls relaxed and widened more, as if anticipating the Alpha rutting into her.

He let go of her knees, pulling out in defeat and looking over his shoulder as the sliding door opened, a predatory look in Osomatsu's eyes as the two

males regarded each other. Choromatsu lowered his gaze as he attempted to move away from (y/n)'s writhing form before he felt a hot hand on his shoulder, looking back up to see Osomatsu giving him a strained smile.

"Take the front."

"Wha--"

"Little Ichi, move," Osomatsu growled as he tugged off the sweatshirt and undershirt, swiftly unbuttoning his jeans as (y/n) whimpered loudly. Ichimatsu scrambled out of the way as Osomatsu took his place, easily lifting her up onto his lap and setting her on top of the curved bulge in his briefs. Wading up some of his shirt, the Alpha shoved it into his mouth and completely smothered his enlarged canines.

Choromatsu took in a sharp gasp as he realized what the oldest brother was doing, swiping off the cooled slick from his member before positioning himself over the squirming (y/n). She was a mess, with tears streaming from her eyes and drool dribbling down from her open mouth. Most of her attention was on the Alpha behind her, wanting to remove that thin barrier between the two of them and have him claim her, but Choromatsu could see the small glimmer in (y/n)'s eyes when she glanced back at him.

She didn't want it to happen like this either.

An angry grunt from Osomatsu made Choromatsu focus back on the task at hand, his member hardening at the thought of mating with his girlfriend and having a small audience. Reality came crashing back as (y/n) gave a guttural cry underneath him, her sheath fully hilting him and tightening down like a vice.

Sweat poured down his face and shoulders, bracing his knees against Osomatsu's legs and pushing (y/n)'s legs wide, much wider than before. A smothered grunt emanated from the Alpha as (y/n)'s hands freed his member from the undergarment prison behind her back, using Choromatsu's thrusting to slide her hands up and down its length. Osomatsu quickly pinned her hands between his chest, wrapping his arms around her breasts and smushing the two mammaries between his forearms, causing her erect

nipples to perk up even higher. Choromatsu took advantage of the new position and sucked on one of them, using his hand for the other.

He grunted as (y/n) tightened around him even more, her eyes rolling to the back of her head as her voice became unraveled. Both males made brief eye contact over her left shoulder, the Beta extremely surprised to see the Alpha holding back from tearing him to shreds over the Omega.

He had to finish her off quickly or he

was

going to lose her to an out-of-control Osomatsu.

Choromatsu bit down on the nape of her neck, earning a shriek of pleasure from (y/n) as he clenched his jaw tightly. He didn't have the fangs of an Alpha to completely puncture the skin, but he could leave a nasty-looking indent that would serve as his visual claim.

(Y/n)'s walls tightened even more around his length, his climax approaching much faster than he expected. Choromatsu cried out as his seed spilled into her waiting womb, feeling her buck underneath him before he slid out of (y/n) completely exhausted.

His fists clenched as he closed his eyes in frustration, scooting away from the pair and laying on his back to recover from the sexual marathon.

Choromatsu didn't have the stamina to keep up with his new Omega's demands.

I didn't know which way was up.

My body felt Osomatsu underneath it and turned into a sniveling, whimpering mess when Choromatsu pulled out, knowing that the 'distraction' was out of the picture. I had bit my cheek sometime during the sex, tasting the faint iron mixing with the salt from my tears as I wished for this damned heat to fuck off.

Glancing down towards Choromatsu's form laying on the floor in exhaustion, I opened my mouth to call out to him but released a heady mewl as Osomatsu shifted underneath me. A thick, heated rod pushed against the small of my back before pressing against the space between my buttocks, sending a shock up my nerves as my brain fully comprehended that there was still an Alpha underneath me.

I wanted more...

I wanted out.

"Osomatsu~!" The name fell from my lips like thick honey, feeling him flinch under me before his hands released my chest and moved to my hips, his fingers sending bolts of electricity up my spine. Gravity twisted on me and I realized that I was propping myself up over Choromatsu's head, his expression holding just as surprise as me.

Osomatsu nudged my knees wider on the ground and pressed a splayed hand against my upper back, pushing me down closer to Choromatsu. My boyfriend took full advantage and guided my lips to his, sealing an upside down kiss as Osomatsu's fingers slid against my slick folds before dragging them towards my butt. I cried out into Choromatsu's mouth as I felt Osomatsu's fingers curling up inside my second hole, the Omega side screaming for pleasure while the small rational part of me begged for mercy.

Osomatsu's lengthy girth slipped inside easily, the muscles in my waist relaxing and letting him fill me up. Choromatsu seemed to pick up the slightly pained reaction in my face, kissing my hungrily as his hands traced down my neck and clavicle to squeeze my breasts. I leaned forward more, kissing him back just as needy while Osomatsu leaned over my back, his hands wrapping around my waist so tightly that I was sure he'd leave bruises.

The familiar wave came surging back over me as my body remembered that I hadn't climaxed, my body shuddering with a harsh release before feeling Osomatsu lift me up and pull me against him as his hands replaced Choromatsu's, our lips pulling apart as Osomatsu rode his own wave of

pleasure and unleashed a hot load inside of me. I cried out as he kept pounding into me, a sudden growth swelling and locking us together for a moment before his arms finally relaxed.

My throat felt raw. Osomatsu spat out something before gently laying me next to Choromatsu, his girth making me feel empty as he pulled out. I felt tears fall from my eyes as I closed them, the new Omega side of me finally feeling satisfied before I slipped into unconsciousness.

There were quiet mutterings around me as I stirred from sleep, feeling a heavy blanket covering my body before I opened my eyes to see Osomatsu and Choromatsu sitting on the couch in their shared bedroom. Osomatsu glanced down at me before tapping Choromatsu's closest shoulder, pointing to me before my boyfriend moved from the couch to kneel next to me.

Choromatsu's scent of apples and pears filled my nose, picking up a lingering smell of lavender as his hands brushed my hair out of my eyes.

"Evening, (y/n)..." The smile on his pointed mouth barely reached his tired eyes, "Sleep well?"

"How...long was I out for?" I raised a hand to rub my forehead, noticing that I wasn't wearing any clothing underneath the blanket, "...and why am I still naked...?"

"You were out for nearly the whole day, close to fourteen hours," Choromatsu adjusted the blanket over me, tucking some of the sides underneath my body to keep the warmth in, "As for the nude part..."

"You had your first heat," Osomatsu finished, still sitting on the couch in his pajamas, "It was quite a violent one."

Heat...? Ah!

My hand raced down to the nape of my neck, feeling indented teeth marks but nothing that could have been created by an Alpha's sharp canines.

"No worries, I made sure that I couldn't mark you," He raised both hands in surrender.

"We were actually wanting to...talk with you about something, if you're in the right mindset," Choromatsu gently moved my hand away from my neck.

I only raised an eyebrow in response.

"Well...with you suddenly presenting as an Omega..." Choromatsu looked nervous before continuing, "Osomatsu has agreed to help out during your heat cycles. Since I'm just a Beta, I can't...satisfy you anymore on my own, so Osomatsu is willing to help out where I fall short."

My wide eyes fell to Osomatsu, who only gave a smile with his eyes closed in return.

"That's only if you agree to it, though...Today was a bit of an emergency, but now we can plan for the future..." Choromatsu's voice lowered in volume, "...if you're still willing to have me..."

My mind finally put a thought to the look:

Choromatsu was worried that I wouldn't want him anymore...

"I accept, but only on the condition that

you

are always the one I'm looking at," I gave a wide smile, gently poking his nose.

"What am I, some Alpha sidepiece that can't get a glance or two?" Osomatsu huffed.

"You heard you, older brother. The Omega laid down her rules," Choromatsu looked up at him and sent a wicked sneer his way, the eldest returning the look before lowering his gaze to me.

"Guess I have no choice," The sneer was replaced with a wide smile, "I'll be your heat partner, (y/n)."

--Mature--
HighSchool!Choromatsu x HighSchool!Reader

Inspired by MyTiddiesItch's prompt.

WARNING! This is a mature chapter, and meant for an 18+ audience. If you're younger than that, I respectfully ask that you find something else to read.

If you're older than 18, you may continue at your own discretion.

This story contains rape scenes (male to female).

(Note: Choromatsu is only related to Ichimatsu.)

Choromatsu adjusted his glasses before clearing his throat, his steely exterior hiding the unraveling bundle of nerves he was becoming as he stood at the front of the classroom. Flicking out his wrist to straighten out a crisp sheet of paper, he began to speak.

"In order for this class to stand out from the others in this upcoming school festival, I ask that you all try to come up with original ideas," He flinched inwardly at his voice, squeezing his vocal chords a little more to make sure his pitch was high, "While the ever-popular maid cafe and haunted classroom will still be submitted as ideas, I want us to push beyond that and truly make this festival experience unique."

Choromatsu continued to read from the paper, offering different ideas for the class to think about before ending his speech.

While there was no response to anything he said, Choromatsu's eyes instead focused on a few words that were spelled wrong on the page, taking out a pen and quickly correcting them. His dark eyes glanced around the empty classroom as he started his little speech once more, going through it and adjusting the sentences so it flowed to his ears.

A soft knock on the classroom door sounded out before it slid open, revealing a female student in her winter uniform. Her colored eyes singled him out in the room before a large smile spread across her lips, her head tilting just a little bit to the right as she stepped inside the classroom.

"Found you," She called out in a teasing tone, "We were wondering when you were coming to the club."

"(Y/n), I'm sorry!" Choromatsu frantically moved from the chalkboard to his desk, stuffing the paper into his bag before rushing towards her, "I completely forgot that we were meeting today!"

"It's all right. The only other members are your brother and friends, so there isn't much of a rush," (Y/n) waited for him patiently before walking out of the room, leading the way towards the small room that housed one of the smaller clubs in school.

Choromatsu caught himself staring at her hair as she walked, trailing a little behind her to watch it sway with each step. To him, it was just the right length and the right color.

He blinked in surprise when (y/n) turned back to him, an inquisitive look on her face.

"Ah, sorry...I didn't hear you."

"No worries," The look melted into another smile, "I was just asking what you were practicing for in an empty classroom. It sounded like some kind of speech that the class representative would make."

"Well..." He laughed a little nervously, "I'm not the class rep, but I was getting tired of the same thing being suggested every year for the school

festival."

"I get it," (Y/n) turned to walk up a flight of stairs, the school skirt bouncing just a little more with each step, "Too many maid cafes or haunted rooms, right?"

"Exactly," Choromatsu averted his eyes, taking each step with precision and following behind her until she stopped at the assigned clubroom, sliding the door open and revealing the other three club members.

Ichimatsu looked up from a book he was reading near the back corner, surrounded by a few pillows that acted as sitting cushions. His dark eyes glanced at Choromatsu before settling on (y/n), closing the book and standing up, "Is it too much to ask for the club to start on time?"

"I don't think it's that bad," Karamatsu lifted his head up from his desk, revealing a sheet of paper with some scribblings on it, "It's a nice little thing for us to do together and we get to have (y/n) join us form her busy schedule."

"It's not

that

busy," (Y/n) moved from the door towards the closet in the back, opening it and taking out a storage box labeled 'Book Club', "I'm just happy that you guys are able to find some time for this."

"The official club is a lot more strict than this one," Jyushimatsu huffed while closing a notebook, "I don't wanna read a book a week and make a report on it...I just want to enjoy reading."

"Well, that's kinda why I started this club," She set the container down on the table near the front of the room, the noise drawing the brothers over, "I know the school festival is coming up, but I wanted your guys opinion on my idea."

"Oh, the whole thing about us joining as an official club?" Ichimatsu yawned a little, barely covering his mouth with his hand.

"Yeah," (Y/n) nodded.

"I don't think it's a terrible idea, but we're not an official club in the eyes of the school administration," Choromatsu offered, "Our motives line up too much with the actual Literary Club, so we'd just end up merging with them."

"What about if we just tried to come up with a different way of saying them, something that would be divergent enough for us to be considered a different club," Karamatsu pressed his hands together, a nervous look in his eyes as he looked at the group.

"That could work..." (Y/n) tapped her finger against her bottom lip, "But there's only so many ways we could say the same thing over and over without repeating ourselves to death."

"We enjoy stories in any kind of format," Jyushimatsu huffed, "I don't know how that's so hard to say and I don't understand how that lines up with what those book nerds do."

"I'll try to figure something out by tomorrow," Choromatsu offered, glancing at (y/n) to see her eyes light up and feeling a light blush rise in his cheeks, "I'm pretty good at defending my case."

The other three boys groaned in near unison, making him glare at them as they reflected the same look back.

"I think it's fine for Choromatsu to do," (Y/n) tried to placate the sudden tension in the room, "Besides, while he's working on that, we can all be doing something that could make our club seem entertaining for others."

It had been settled that Karamatsu would make little short five-hundred word stories for people to read outloud, Jyushimatsu and Ichimatsu would help make decorations to hang up in the room, Choromatsu would work on creating an argument for the club being considered independent from the

Literature Club, and (y/n) was going to find stories that everyone could enjoy.

When the clock showed the ending time for the little club, (y/n) stayed behind like usual to clean up the room. Choromatsu had tried to offer to stay with her, but Ichimatsu commented that he needed to get started on his clubwork immediately, practically kicking Choromatsu out of the room before helping (y/n) in his stead.

Choromatsu grumbled as he made his way home, angry thoughts pointed towards his only brother and taking the long way home, quickly slipping out of his pressed uniform and into his home clothes. When he had finished the food, Choromatsu's mood brightened a little as he moved up towards his shared bedroom and slid into the chair in front of the desk that he and Ichimatsu used for homework.

Taking out a sharpened pencil, he adjusted his glasses and began to scribble on the lined paper in front of him, an argument speech slowly forming on the sheet.

"You're all here," (Y/n) walked through the 'club' room door, her happy expression quickly shifting into thought, "Well...not Ichimatsu. Choro, is he sick?"

Choromatsu's heart fluttered at her nickname for him, "He stayed home the whole day because he wasn't feeling well."

"Aw, geez...were you able to get your decorations done, Jyushimatsu?" She turned to the frowning boy, his angry eyes glancing away from her as his tongue clicked within his mouth.

"Yeah..."

"Would you mind covering what Ichimatsu was supposed to do? It'll help immensely."

"...fine," His eyes narrowed a little, catching Choromatsu's eyes before he moved towards the room closet.

"I'm not fully finished with the short stories, but I brought what I did finish so you could do what you needed to," Karamatsu offered, the freckles on his cheeks becoming more pronounced as a light blush began to spread.

"I'll take them to get laminated after the club is over," (Y/n) took the small stack from him with gratitude, "What about you, Choromatsu? How's that argument coming along?"

"I'm not fully finished, but it's coming along," He nodded as she looked towards him.

"Then we'll be ready by the time the school festival starts after the weekend."

I'd never say this to his face, but Choromatsu was acting more and more strange as the week dragged on. Whenever I'd ask him about Ichimatsu being sick and offered to bring him the class notes throughout the week, he had this look in his eyes that dissuaded me from asking about it for the remainder of the day.

So, I thought I would be a decent friend and stop by their house. I had known Ichimatsu for a lot longer than Choromatsu, and he never became sick enough to stay out an entire week of school.

Ichimatsu and I had a bit of history with each other, as we were exes. It was a brief stint between us, just a small test to see if we really loved each other or not. Turns out that he never found the same feelings I had for him, so we broke it off mutually. Of course it sucked, but I wasn't going to hold it against either of us.

It never stopped me from worrying about how he was doing, though.

Choromatsu had become more and more tight-lipped about Ichimatsu, so today I found myself standing in front of their house with my fist knocking on their sliding door.

"Hello? Is anyone home?" I called out to the silence, not sure if their parents were home or not. From what I had remembered, they were out more than often enough and let their sons run of the house while they were doing chores.

I tentatively opened the sliding door and stepped into the shoe area, taking a quick look at who was in the house. I only saw Ichimatsu's shoes and Choromatsu's house slippers.

"Ichimatsu, it's (y/n)," I called out towards where their bedroom was, my grip tightening around the handle of my school bag as I took off my own shoes, stepping onto the wooden floor of the home, "I've got class notes for you to copy."

There wasn't any response, drawing me up the stairs to the second floor. I stood outside their bedroom door and knocked on it gently, "Ichimatsu...?"

Quietly opening the sliding door, I hoped to leave the class notes on their desk so Ichimatsu could copy it whenever he woke up from his sleep.

Instead, I stared at the horrid sight hanging limply from the overhead postbeam, the rope tightly wound around the corpse's neck and biting deep into its leathery skin. The body looked bloated towards its feet, the black skin swollen with fluids that had stopped circulating in the body. One of its eyes was bulging out of the socket, bloodshot and unblinking towards the ground underneath the cadaver.

Ichimatsu's name registered in my mind before I felt myself fall backwards, my vision growing dark as I moved.

My mind woke up first, feeling a tightness in my wrists and ankles before realizing that I was tied in a spread-eagled position. Cool air constantly brushed over my body, alerting me to a nearby fan that was circulating the

air. I opened my eyes to see a cobbled ceiling, a light source somewhere nearby illuminating the room.

A noise sounding like a sigh emanated from somewhere near my feet, drawing my attention down and seeing a haggard-looking Choromatsu standing up near the end of whatever I was tied down to.

"Choromatsu...!" My mind raced to figure out if he was here to help free me, or if he was the one that put me here, "What's going on?"

His relaxed demeanor told me that I wasn't going to find any help from him, Choromatsu's eyes slowly looking over my form as he lay a hand on my left ankle. His fingers played with the hem of my socks, tugging them out before sliding underneath and pulling them down as far as the restraints would go.

"I was...kinda hoping that it would happen this way, but at the same time..." Choromatsu paused, removing his glasses and laying them down somewhere, "...I knew there would be a time when I couldn't stop you from seeing him."

"...you killed Ichimatsu, didn't you...?" My breath hitched as his other hand started to play with my other sock, following the same routine as the first. He only gave a hum as a response.

"I didn't actually hang him, (y/n)," The table I was on creaked as he climbed on top, my mind realizing that it was actually a bed. I tried to pull at my restraints, not wanting to stay and find out what was going to happen, "He did that himself, but I just couldn't bear for you to see a sight like that..."

His lips lowered to my right knee, kissing it gently as his hands skimmed across my skin, ducking underneath the hem of my school skirt.

"Choromatsu...please, don't--!"

"I didn't find it fair, (y/n)..." The dark glint in Choromatsu's eyes stilled my panic for a moment before my heart rose to my throat, feeling his fingers rest just at the edge of my underwear, "You were in a relationship with most

of the guys in the club...but never me. I want to show you that I'm worth your time..."

"There's a better way to do this...!" I cried out, tensing up as I felt one of his hands slip underneath the stretchy hem, my skirt lifted up near my nethers as Choromatsu ghosted his fingers around the area, "We can try a relationship the normal way...you know, starting out going out on dates...?"

"That never worked for you," The dark look was back in his eyes as he moved his mouth up from my knee to my waist, his teeth clamping down on the school vest before swiftly pulling up towards my chest. I struggled harder with a scream before my lips were smothered by his, drowning out the scream as he kissed me hungrily, one of his hands finishing off the work his teeth started with my vest and pulling the majority of it above my breasts. Releasing my lips from the kiss, Choromatsu moved his hand to gently stroke my left cheek, "The normal way was too hard for me to keep doing, so I had opted for the faster way by getting rid of the people that you liked and waiting for the right moment to take you for my own...but that was before I found you fainted at my house."

"I'm not dating any of the guys in the club!" My voice sounded tight as his hand loosened the tie from the front of my button-up shirt, gently popping the first button free from its eye, "Choromatsu...please don't do this...!"

"You'll be screaming for me by the end of this," He laughed a little, quickly kissing me again before moving the hand that was still underneath my underwear around towards the back of my skirt, lifting my waist into the air and pressing my nethers against him. I yelled out into the kiss as I felt him unhook my skirt free, the cloth coming loose around my waist and revealing my panties. Choromatsu's other hand managed to free two other buttons before pulling away from the kiss, lowering his attention to the white cloth tightly wrapped around my waist and groin.

Scooting back down until his face hovered dangerously close to my mound, he looked back up at me with a smile.

"How much should I bet that this has already been taken by someone...?"

My eyes widened in fear, trying to pull myself away before the length of cloth cradled against my entrance was pulled aside, Choromatsu's head immediately diving in and lapping his tongue across my folds. I screamed as passion tried to take control of my mind, the fear keeping me rooted in the situation while my nerves were demanding for some kind of release.

His tongue withdrew before laying itself completely over my entrance for a long moment, his breath hot on my groin. No matter how I moved within my restraints, I couldn't pull away from him or find a weakness in the binds. Choromatsu chuckled a little before suddenly pushing his tongue against me, my folds easily parting and revealing the warmer parts to his already-hot organ. Like a dog finding water in the desert, he started licking at my entrance viciously while a growl built up in his throat.

"Oh, (y/n)...you taste so good..." His words were partially slurred, "So much better than I could ever imagine..."

"Choromatsu, stop!" I ignored his sweet whispers of pleasure as my mind sparked with the intimate contact, crying out more as both of his hands hooked around my outer thighs and pulled himself deeper into my wet cavern. His tongue prodded against my walls, extending out as far as it would go before pressing against the side and dragging it back into his mouth.

While his mouth was busy with my entrance, Choromatsu slid his hands up my sides, pressing down over the shirt and reaching for my breasts. The buttons he had undone had partially revealed them tucked inside my bra, but that wasn't enough for him anymore as his fingers grabbed the ends of the shirt and pulled them apart, popping the last few buttons that were still closed and fully revealing my bra. The plain white material matched my underwear, and the sight seemed to turn him on more as his tongue picked up its pace while his hands kneaded my breasts underneath his fingers, the flesh pressing up against the bra.

I begged him to stop until my voice stopped working, a pitiful moan squeezing from my throat as Choromatsu finally pulled himself from me, licking his lips with a hazy glare in his eyes. My wrists were sore from the constant tugging and pulling, left helpless as Choromatsu moaned while

lowering his lips to kiss the tops of my breasts, giving each one a chaste kiss while his fingers worked the flesh out of the bra enough to expose the nipples. Tears flooded my eyes as he took a mouthful in, his tongue circling around the nipple his lips encompassed while his opposing hand played with the other breast. His new position had our waists flush together, his knees planted underneath my thighs as I felt something swell between us, my exposed entrance bristling with excitement as the fabric of his school pants rubbed against it.

My arms began to feel numb from me struggling to break free and the tears streamed down my cheeks as Choromatsu switched to give his attention to the other breast, pinching and pulling at the moist nipple he had sucked to erection. I didn't want to feel good, but I gave a gasping moan as he gently rolled my other nipple between his teeth, his tongue flicking at the head before letting it go and diving back down to pull the mound of flesh into his mouth once more.

The sounds he was making were lewd and wet, each release of skin popping while he breathlessly moaned in pleasure. His growing bulge poked and prodded at my entrance through his pants, the sharp line of the zipper almost pressing in as Choromatsu began to hump me with fervor.

"(Y/n), you're making nicer sounds now," He pulled away from my breast, grabbing it and pushing both of them together before taking both nipples into his mouth, his tongue rubbing itself over both erect nubs and sending sparks up my spine. My mind was going blank and a small thought wormed its way into my head.

Maybe I should just enjoy this

.

Choromatsu pulled away, one of his hands reaching for his belt and the sound of a zipper being undone snapped me back to reality.

I didn't want this, not in this way and not from Choromatsu!

There wasn't any warning before Choromatsu pulled back a little with his hips and slid a finger across my inner lips, the movement making me moan. A sudden intrusion made me scream out, a solid shafted object ramming itself deep within my core as Choromatsu cried out in pleasure, almost smothering my scream of pain. The thing sat still for only a moment before it pulled out and jammed back inside, the pace dizzying as Choromatsu loosened his tie and lowered his head back to my breasts, each part bouncing with his forceful thrusts.

"(Y/n), you feel good...! Ah, damn! I should've done this earlier!" He pulled his head away a little bit before pressing his lips against mine, dipping his tongue into my mouth as I screamed for relief, the sound muffled as he played with one of my breasts while tucking an arm underneath my back to lift my lower half off of the bed. The new angle made him cry out into the kiss, the pace picking up even more as I felt the metal zipper start to tear at the outer lips of my core.

He suddenly pulled himself out, muttering words I couldn't hear before I felt my leg binds become loose. Both of my legs were pushed towards my head, nearly bending me in half before Choromatsu thrusted back into me. His partially sitting position was unbearable for me, the pace just as fast as when he pulled out as he kept slamming himself down into me. My vision started to fade to white as I opened my mouth, heated pants coming out instead of cries.

Lowering my legs back to the bed, Choromatsu was once more on top of me, reaching above my head and pulling out in the same movement. The friction left my core rubbed raw and I curled up my legs to try and protect myself a little, feeling my right hand come loose from its restraint before he pushed me onto my left side. His slick shaft slipped right back into me without an inch of resistance as his hand pulled my right leg over his, his other hand grabbing at my head and turning it back to face him. The kiss was messy, heated, and full of need from Choromatsu, my body numbing to his rough treatment as I started to lose my mind.

"Oh, fuck...Pregnant at eighteen...What do you think of that, (y/n)?" His voice was hoarse, the words partially muffled by the desperate kiss, "Is that what you want?"

"Choromatsu...no..." I tried to pull away, but his hands kept me locked in position. I groaned as I felt his member swell even more, pleading silently to any higher being that would listen to make my womb infertile.

"You'll be a good mother...ugh, (y/n)...!" Choromatsu bucked into me a few more times before completely hilting himself in me, a sensation of warmth spreading in my core and flooding my mind as my body tried to make the experience pleasurable. He pulled out and rammed back into me again, another wave of heat coursing through me as he panted behind me.

I was only eighteen...he was only eighteen...I didn't want to be a mother this young!

Choromatsu sighed in satisfaction as he slowly pulled out his length, still hard despite the ejaculation. He lay several kisses on my exposed shoulder and neck, resting a hand over my stomach for a moment before letting me lay on my back once more.

"For our first time, that was amazing," He kissed my bruised lips deeply, moaning into it before I groaned, his fingers dancing across my entrance once more. With the dark look back in his eyes, Choromatsu pulled away from the kiss while licking his lips. I cried out as his fingers slipped back into me, two digits roughly rubbing at my semen-coated walls while his still-hard length pressed against the inner folds once more, "Let's keep going until I know you'll always be mine."

Devil!Ichimatsu x Angel!Reader

Inspired by Kim__chan's prompt.

(Warning: While this one-shot is SFW, there is a heated scene towards the end. Read at your own discretion.)

My chest heaved as I pushed the spear further down, the blade giving a satisfying crunch as the wriggling wyrm underneath me stilled, its head falling to the ground limply while the wings gave up all resistance. The clashing of metal-on-shield echoed around me, cries of anger and pain mixing with the cacophony despite the battlefield covered in a thick fog that disrupted sight.

Pulling my spear from the demon's carcass, I flicked my wrist and felt the shaft twist itself into a bow, the blade disappearing into the ornamental 'feathers' that offered a counter-balance along the upper and lower limbs. Gathering some of my power into a narrow bolt of an arrow, I pulled back and aimed towards the sky, loosing the energy arrow as it arched upwards and split into smaller arrows as it turned back towards the ground. Hearing the multitude of arrows find targets, I held onto the bow and spread my wings wide, the armor along the leading edge of each wing stretching out before I shoved them down hard, gaining enough lift to take off.

The wings I had were comparatively large and appeared cumbersome, but they rarely got in the way during a fight and were able to be used as weapons when outfitted correctly.

Today was not one of those days.

I had opted for a more defensive approach when I had heard who was going to be leading the demonic army, knowing that the opposing commander preferred speed and agility while I took advantage of my stamina and strength.

The fog swirled around my wings, shifting with the gusts that they created as I took to the skies and lifted myself higher and higher until I could see the flashes of miracles and curses collide against one another, looking to see where the enemy was. Another twitch of my wrist shifted the bow into a long staff, the 'feathers' shifting upwards along its length and fanning out on either side of the tip. The shaft of each metallic feather created a circle on top of the staff, the empty space inside lighting up with a light blue energy before each piece settled into place and finished the transformation.

"...let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven..." The familiar words fell from my lips as praise, the blue energy glowing brighter before sending out a pulse downwards, carving an opening through the thick fog and spreading along the battlefield until the fog had been completely dispelled.

A stray dark purple blast drew my attention downwards, my wings tilting into a roll as another orb streaked by me. Once more, the staff shortened in length while growing in width, a large blade carved from the metallic feathers to form a longsword while I quickly brought it up to my face, blocking a strike that was aimed at my neck.

The offending sword skipped across my own until it met the hilt, the black blade carved like a sharpened human spine with elongated edges that dripped in blood. The blade spread out like the spine was being pulled apart as it met the hilt and handguard, with thick purple tendons that connected each piece together. The tendons hardened and lost their purple color as they merged into the handguard, an armored hand holding the handle tightly as the opponent pushed up into my own sword.

The gauntlet matched the rest of the enemy's armor, their own wings just as armored as mine were, shaped into a wicked appearance. Black plate armor was crafted into a twisted visage of my own gold suit, the inner cracks protected by purple chainmail that looked like skin, a mockery of the white chainmail underneath my own armor. Fierce purple eyes glowed underneath the visor of the black helmet, staring right at my unprotected face.

Pushing the opponent's sword away and twisting mid-air, I caught them in the crook of my right wing, hearing a satisfying '

crunch

' as the hardened wing armor collided with their pauldron. Spinning once more, I kicked them downward as my wing pulled back to release its hold on them, angling down and chasing them in the fall. Their own wings spread wide, the hybridization of skin and feathers snapping outward to stabilize them.

I was right above them when they cast their gaze upwards.

Clamping both wings tightly against my armored back, I caught their sword and neck on my own blade, spiraling down and crashing into the ground. The demon coughed as the dust settled around us, my sword buried in the ground with their own having shoved it aside last minute to avoid decapitation. Their helmet was knocked away, fully exposing their face.

My eyes narrowed as I recognized the face glaring back at me. His dark hair was unkempt and scorched from too many close calls, the scars on his face nearly disfiguring him, the glowing purple eyes that held so much animosity towards my kind.

Ichimatsu, Commander of the Demonic army.

While he was still a part of an elite task force, his skills on the battlefield had seen him quickly rise above the others and into the frontline of every participating battle for decades.

I could only guess that this was an embarrassing position to find himself in: sprawled underneath the Celestial Commander, my blade still nicking his throat while my golden eyes glared down at him. The armor he wore must have forced him to move slower than he was used to and now it was only a cumbersome weight keeping him pinned beneath my blade and heel.

"The armor is new," I snarled above him, pressing my foot harder against the breastplate.

"Don't get too comfortable with how it looks on me," Ichimatsu took a deep breath and lost his physical form, shifting into a mist that floated down

through the armor and behind me as I turned to face him. Letting out the breath, his physical form returned and revealed his usual attire that was underneath the ungainly suit of armor.

Black leather was tightly wrapped around his chest and shoulders, leaving his upper arms exposed before armored gloves covered his forearms and hands. The leather continued down his waist before disappearing underneath greaves that were stained to look purple, scuff marks cutting across every inch of the metal. The sabaton were just as damaged as the greaves, losing the purplish color and fading to black. A long dark purple bolt of cloth wrapped around his chest before draping over his left shoulder and hanging off the right shoulder, an extra length of cloth settling over his head to create a deep hood that only revealed his glowing eyes and mouth to the light, his other features completely shadowed by the hood.

His wings ruffled themselves up a little to adjust the fabric that fell behind his back, resting his free hand on his waist while the other rested on the pommel of his sword, the tip digging into the ground.

"It looked ridiculous on you."

"Glad to hear your opinion," Ichimatsu's eyes slightly narrowed, his gaze sweeping over my form before a confident smirk crossed his lips, "Tired already?"

"That's none of your concern," I hoisted up my shape-shifting sword and pointed it at him, keeping it level. I couldn't afford to show any inch of weakness despite feeling a supernatural fatigue reach deep within every fiber of my being, straining for a full breath.

Ichimatsu's lips grew tight as he lifted his own sword in response, charging forward quickly with his normal speed. Shifting the attacking sword away with a parrying swing, I charged forward with my whole body, my wings offering more momentum than my legs. The point of my longsword glanced away from his chest, deflected by his sword slightly nudging it wide as his own swordpoint sank into my left shoulder, biting into the small opening underneath my armor.

He shoved the sword deeper into my shoulder and used my momentum against me before I could counter, bracing himself as my weight pushed me onto his weapon. I grimaced as I felt his sword grind against my shoulder blade, the tip dangerously close to my wing joint. Grabbing the blade with my armored hand, I gripped it tightly to keep it from sinking any further.

Shoving a rough kick into his abdomen, I knocked Ichimatsu back quite a ways and groaned as his sword pulled out of my shoulder, fluttering my wings to try and balance myself.

A vicious outcry of victory sounded behind me before I felt a searing pain in my right wing, my body yanked down to the side as something heavy landed on the wing, "I got her, Commander!"

I clenched my teeth and quickly snapped my left wing in close, using the momentum to roll sideways and pull my right wing upwards, the motion acting like a trebuchet that ripped free the black trident that had pierced through near the wing's wrist joint, sending the little creature flying off and away from me.

My vision shook as I couldn't gather my footing in time, nearly collapsing from the effort as it became more and more difficult to breathe. I could see through my double-vision that the imp had scrambled to his feet, racing back towards me brandishing the wicked trident with a sneer on his face.

I had to stop the attack, fully understanding what was going on when I suddenly lost all feeling in my right wing.

Devil venom.

The venomous weapons that I had been able to keep at bay were taking their toll on me, and I had heard of many angels that had fallen to the venom when struck too many times. I was hit a few times from the fight with the wyrm and I was hoping that I'd be able to pull from the fight with Ichimatsu before I was speared with another poisoned weapon.

The imp was too close for me to block his attack, the tines of his trident inches from my face before a black sword intercepted the strike and swung

up away from my face. My strength faded as someone stepped between the imp and I, a purple color swallowing my vision before I blacked out.

"Commander?!" The imp reeled back, a look of shock crossed its face as Ichimatsu glared down at the pitiful creature.

"She's my kill," His eyes narrowed further, "Find your own."

With a squeal, the imp darted away without looking back.

The fog that Ichimatsu had summoned before started to roll back onto the field, the active miracle cast by (y/n) disappearing now that she was unconscious. With the thick fog fully smothering both him and (y/n) from sight, Ichimatsu dropped his sword and knelt in front of her, hovering a slightly shaking hand over her head.

"(Y/n)..." His wings lowered until they were nearly flat on the ground, his lead feathers almost touching hers as the black feathered limbs mirrored the positions of her white wings.

Ichimatsu couldn't let her disappear because of their fight.

Sucking in a breath, he fully placed his left hand on the side of her head, feeling how feverish she was before pulling away like he'd been struck with static electricity. The blood underneath the shoulder that he pierced started to pool, staining her unsullied armor and hair.

Ichimatsu ripped off the pauldron, snapping the leather that kept the armor together and exposing the wound. Shifting her to lay on her back, he adjusted her limp wings and pressed a hand against the wound, wincing as the passive protection wards along the inside of her armor vibrated against his nerves.

Concentrating on the venom circulating through her body, he recalled as much of it as he could, pulling his hand upwards from the wound to see a thick black liquid ooze from the puncture and coagulate into a small orb just

underneath his hand. With a flick of his wrist, the orb tossed itself to the ground and soaked into the dirt, letting him focus on her right wing. Gently taking off the lead feather's armor plates, Ichimatsu exposed the trident wound nearly severing the wing's wrist joint, clenching his teeth and silently promising to murder the imp that caused it.

Moving some of the blood-soaked feathers aside, he traced his index and middle finger around each hole, smiling a little in satisfaction as he urged the wounds to close. The skin stretched and reached out on either side of the wound, swelling as soon as it touched either the other side or another tendril, swiftly stitching the wound closed. After he finished the last pierced wound, Ichimatsu gently flexed the wing to ensure that he didn't damage it further.

Focusing back on the stab wound he created, he used the same trick and watched as it went through the same process.

"You didn't have to do that..."

He shifted his gaze from (y/n)'s shoulder to her face, seeing her golden eyes look up at him through hooded lids. She still looked out of it, possibly only waking up for a moment before falling back into unconsciousness.

"No, but I wanted to."

"Always the troublemaker," (Y/n) reached up to his face, running a few fingers down his cheek. The armor singed his skin, but he didn't show the pain, "When are you going to...let me have some scars?"

"When I'm buried in the ground," Ichimatsu gave a rare smile, "You said you have an image to uphold, remember?"

Her hand fell from his face, landing on her chest before settling down against her side. The smile on his lips widened a little when he realized she passed out again, standing tall over her before spreading his wings wide and taking off, leaving her on the ground.

I stared out beyond the railing of the bridge, not paying attention to those walking by me.

I didn't like being here, at the Crossroads where the quarterly meetings took place. My place was on the battlefield, not spinning words or rhetoric in an auditorium for others to listen to. I had passed off those duties to someone else, giving them my reports from the previous fights and what the armies needed to be trained in to improve our chances of victory.

Resting my forearms against the railing, I leaned against it as my wings tucked in closer behind me.

It had been a few weeks since Ichimatsu and his army vanished after I fell unconscious. I would normally see him amongst the devil elite, but they had arrived without him today. Exchanging glares when the five of them arrived, I watched their backs until they disappeared into the building where the important meetings were happening between both sides. The commanders were enough of a challenge on the field, with each member employing different tactics and styles of fighting, but the only one that held back was Ichimatsu.

If any of the others had been on the field at that time, I wouldn't be here.

Looking back down at the lazy river underneath the bridge, I let out a silent sigh through my nose and stood back up, intent on walking through the garden that was a little ways off from the meeting building. I could feel the tension from the inside discussion start to grow, wanting to get away from that mess.

There'd be shouting matches, thrown insults, and blame shifted between both parties, but if someone dared to draw a weapon, it'd turn into a war. Knowing myself, I'd probably be the one to trigger it, absentmindedly running my right hand over the metal buckler fastened to my left forearm.

Leaving the bridge walkway, I headed towards one of the sections sequestered in the back of this neutral area, a plot of land that had been transformed into a beautiful garden. The garden was far enough away from the tense chaos of the meetings that I felt like I was alone, taking in a deep

breath and letting it out as I gazed at the blooming sakura trees. The garden caretaker was wonderful at their job, ensuring that each plant grew strong.

"I knew I'd find you here."

A husky voice called out before I glanced behind me, a dark figure leaning against one of the trees with a long purple cloth surrounding most of their form.

"You weren't with the others," I didn't turn around, only looking at the figure from over my shoulder, "Don't tell me you're actually skipping."

"I can't skip if I'm not participating," The person stood up fully and gave a light shrug, walking closer towards me, "Who knows what I'd do with the pressure of being around people I don't like."

"Oh? And what would you call me?" I faced him fully, holding their purple gaze as they walked closer.

"Don't make me say it," The cloth hood pulled back a little to reveal Ichimatsu's scarred face, taking a few steps closer.

"Then show me."

His hands darted out behind my head and hip, pressing me close to him and bringing our lips together into a passionate kiss. Both of us fought for control of the kiss but I forced my tongue between his lips, opening his mouth to mine and deepening the contact even more as I ran both of my hands through his hair. Ichimatsu moaned into my mouth and I couldn't help but laugh a little as I pressed his back into a nearby tree, dominating the enemy commander. I shifted my wings over his, keeping him completely pinned between the tree and I.

Ichimatsu broke the kiss, panting and looking up at me with hooded eyes, a blush forming across his cheeks. I gave him a knowing smile, the corner of my lips curling up before my left hand lifted his chin up towards me, planting another kiss before letting him have a small chance to breathe.

I always took advantage of his submissive nature.

I wouldn't have it any other way.

By the time I pulled away from the second kiss, Ichimatsu was a writhing mess. His face was completely flushed, both wings limp and lightly pressing against my own for support while his chest heaved, his eyes begging for more.

I'd become addicted to the look that he gave me, and

only

me.

"That was for healing my wounds from the last fight," I leaned in close, my breath tickling his ear.

"And--" Ichimatsu swallowed hard, trying to keep himself from moaning out loud, "...what do I get for saving your life?"

"I get to keep going."

His breathy cry of anticipation sounded sweet on my ear, my right hand pulling both of his wrists above his head while my left hand started to unbuckle the leather armor that was wrapped so tightly around his chest.

Ichimatsu x Idol!Reader

Inspired by Kim__chan's prompt.

Ichimatsu glanced down at the paper bag in his left hand, feeling the thick paper ticket tucked safely inside his hoodie pocket with his right fingers as he walked down the street from the concert hall. He took his hand out from the pocket and clenched it tightly, a blush quickly forming over his face as he mentally cheered himself on.

He had done it. He had

finally

done it!

After attending five concerts with VIP passes for a meet-and-greet, he finally had the courage to stand in line and shake her hand!

Ichimatsu had waited patiently for the others to take their pictures with the masked idol, slowly doubting that he could even do it this time before he realized that he was the next person up. He kept rubbing his palms on the inside of his pocket, hoping that the sweat wasn't completely obvious, or that it would gross her out. Shoving a marker and her recent single in her direction, she laughed as she took the items and signed the CD cover. He hadn't paid the extra for a picture to be taken of them together, but now he wished he had.

The paper bag wasn't heavy, but it felt like it suddenly grew ten times heavier as he realized that he'd have to sneak it past his brothers if they were home. A few rolled up posters, a photo album, the signed CD, and a promotional greeting card with her and the band rested safely within it.

Ichimatsu swallowed the sudden accumulation of saliva as he realized the teasing he was going to receive for liking an idol. Choromatsu was level-headed enough to take the amount of mental assault he got, but

Ichimatsu...no, the fourth brother would definitely snap under the constant pressure. His sandaled feet carried him towards the shared house, a last minute decision to shove the bag underneath the front of the hoodie saving him from embarrassment as the youngest brother rounded the corner of their front gate.

"Ah, big brother Ichimatsu," Todomatsu called out, "We were wondering where you went."

"Fed the cats..." Ichimatsu muttered with a partial growl.

"We're going to be heading out to Chibita's for oden soon. Want to come with?" The youngest brushed aside the reply like he normally did.

"No," The response came out harsher than Ichimatsu intended, "Got a meeting with (y/n) after her shift."

"Ah, that's right...your weekly sex session."

"We don't have sex--!"

"Oh, please. A girl like (y/n) and you're not hitting that?" Todomatsu laughed a little, "You're too much of a cherry boy."

"Shut up," Ichimatsu bared his teeth in a snarl, narrowing his eyes into a glare, "Last I heard, you had to leave the most recent mixer because the girls ignored you."

Todomatsu's smile snapped into his own snarl, staring at the older brother for a moment before waving a hand in dismissal and turning away, walking the other direction.

Ichimatsu relaxed his face before turning towards the house, announcing his arrival and walking up to the room the brothers shared. Seeing it empty, he quickly took out the bag and pulled out a few books in the bookcase, revealing a hidden compartment that he had created a while ago to hide his memorabilia. Emptying the bag and organizing the items in the

compartment, he put the books back and folded up the paper bag before sliding it into the stash Choromatsu had behind the bookcase.

Pulling the ticket out of his pocket, he ran a thumb over the raised hellish red lettering.

'Kijo'.

A masked singer that always wore a kijo mask wherever she went, from public events to concerts, she danced and sang with the movable mask on her face. The mask was pure red with white and black detailed lines, creating a monstrous face that seemed to contrast the melodic voice that emanated from behind it. The bottom half of the mask where the mouth was had been crafted to split open and make the illusion that it was the mask possessing the person to sing, moving in unison with the human jaw as she sang and spoke.

The outfits Kijo wore were nothing short of a show in detail, always wearing some shade of red. Her usual outfits were inspired by the old feudal era of Japan, taking notes from ancient texts and drawings of her persona. Today was no different with a dark red shortened kimono with shredded black leggings, the long sash trailing down behind her like a widening skirt as she walked all over the stage in her black boots.

Ichimatsu closed his eyes as he kept rubbing his thumb over the letters spelling out her name, imagining himself back at the concert hall and listening to the rock ballads, soaring soprano notes and demonic yells that ripped from her throat. He had found one of her music videos accidentally while browsing the channels on the television, sitting at home alone while his brothers were out and about. The image of the moving kijo mask hooked him while a soft voice called out the lyrics about a dying nation, watching it fall to ruin underneath her crushing foot, the soft tone shifting suddenly into a screech of laughter that flowed into the chorus.

When he had a chance to use a computer, he looked up what Kijo was all about, finding that she was a popular heavy rock singer that dabbled in some heavy metal, even reaching some international renown when she first toured throughout the world. Ichimatsu was hooked in just a few songs, the

topics covered ranging from feeling homesick to conquering one's greatest fear to a requiem of those that had fallen in battle. He was determined to see her live whenever she came back to Tokyo, saving up what little he had to buy a ticket.

To think that his first concert would be to see a demoness instead of a cat still made him laugh a little.

"Ichimatsu! Call for you!" His mother called out downstairs, dragging him from his thoughts as he stood up while shoving the ticket behind the books, muttering a simple 'okay' as he made his way down the stairs.

"This is Ichimatsu," He grumbled through the phone handset.

"Ichimatsu, it's (y/n)."

His heart fluttered in his chest, "(Y/n), you're calling early...everything all right?"

"Yeah, it's going great!" Her laugh soothed the worry that started to grow in his chest, "I was just letting you know that my shift ended a little earlier than usual today. Did you want to meet up earlier than we scheduled?"

"Ah, s-sure," His index finger started to mess with the phone cord, curling it around the width of the digit before unwinding it, repeating the motion over and over, "We can still meet at the park, if you want."

"That sounds good," He could hear the change in her voice, as if she was nodding like he was right in front of her, "You don't need to worry about changing the time of the reservation, we can just relax at the park beforehand."

"All right. I'll see you in...ten minutes?" He glanced towards a nearby clock.

"Make it five," The confidence in her voice sent a pleasurable shudder up his spine.

With a new meeting time confirmed, Ichimatsu hung up the phone after saying his goodbyes and headed back up to the shared room to get some

more appropriate clothes on.

The click of his shoes hit the pavement sidewalk, looking into the central park area to see if he could recognize her silhouette in the crowd. The light blue suit jacket made him stand out like a sore thumb in the park, and he found (y/n) despite the bright color making some people look at him.

She was sitting underneath one of the larger oak trees, her favorite color dying the fabric of the nice summer dress near the top as it faded into a darker shade of it towards the bottom. Her hair was pinned up, some of the strands loose from the gentle wind that blew through the area.

"Found you," He stood in front of her, taking advantage of her being distracted by something on her phone and smirking at the shocked expression she had before it melted into a smile.

"You made it," She stood up and quickly hugged him, wrapping her arms around his shoulders. He quickly returned the gesture, holding her close to him by her waist, "I wasn't worried that you'd be late. I think I'd actually prefer that with how beautiful it is outside."

"You're the one that said 'five minutes'," Ichimatsu chuckled as she pulled away from the hug, one of her hands trailing down his arm to hold his hand, "If you wanted more time alone, I can always walk away for a bit."

"Nah. You're here now, so why not enjoy it together?" (Y/n) leaned against him for a little bit before he started to lead her down the footpath that wound all the way around the park, intending for the walk to eat up the free time.

"Why did you get out of work early?"

"Something about a big project being finished before schedule. We were given the option to start working on the new one, but most everyone on staff agreed that an early day off would be better for the mind," She gently squeezed his hand, "I definitely needed a break."

"Too much spotlight for you?" Ichimatsu used a phrase she commonly said.

"I guess," (Y/n) laughed a little, "What about you? Busy day like usual?"

"Not really. Nothing really special going on in the life of this NEET," He glanced away from (y/n) as if distracted by some children running in the field next to him, the nervous sweat that started to bead on his face disappeared in a brief gust of wind. He couldn't let (y/n) know about him liking Kijo, either...though she would probably be supportive of it, maybe attending a concert with him. The imaginary taunts of his brothers shut his mouth.

(Y/n) couldn't know, just like his brothers.

"So, I was thinking that maybe you could come back to my apartment after the dinner," (Y/n)'s voice brought him back to reality, making him focus his attention on her, "There's some stuff that I'd like to show you and you can watch a movie from my collection again."

"I can't just borrow it like last time?"

"...please?" Something in the tone of her suddenly soft voice picked at his brain. They hadn't really had time alone together, with her work shifts usually ending around 6 p.m. and her volunteer work kicking in shortly after that. To be home alone with her for the night...

Ichimatsu swallowed hard and turned his thoughts from the distraction trying to get his attention, looking down towards (y/n), "Sure, if that's what you want."

(Y/n) only nodded, the small blush on her cheeks not going unnoticed by Ichimatsu.

A wicked smile crossed his lips before he lowered himself to her eye level, looking directly at her with a hooded gaze, "Don't tell me that the innocent (y/n) has a

plan...

"

She looked up at him, the blush growing larger until it reached her ears, "N-no, I don't...! It's just that...I feel like I haven't spent a lot of time with you in weeks, and I want to make sure that...you enjoy it."

Ichimatsu dropped the teasing look, replacing it with one of understanding as he stood up, "...I get it. With your job nearly overworking you every week, it's hard to find time just to yourself. I can imagine that having a relationship with that stressful job is worse, or would be worse if I was working too."

Her hand tightened around his as he continued.

"You don't have to make yourself happy if that's not what you feel, (y/n). It's okay to cry and complain about stress."

"Ugh, not you too..."

"What?" Ichimatsu looked down, slightly surprised at the shift in tone.

"I've already heard this from one of my co-workers, but they were much more parental about it," She waved her free hand around in dismissal, "Sorry...I

am

happy with you, and spending time with you lets me forget about all of the troubles I have at my job. I understand that you were just trying to help but...can we leave the speeches behind today?"

"Hmm," Ichimatsu twisted his lips up in thought, "Maybe, but you'll have to persuade me."

"Oh?" She looked up at him with her own hooded gaze, "And what will that take?"

Ichimatsu paled. He could say

anything

right now and if she said no, he could brush it off as a joke.

He swallowed hard before leaning down to her ear, "Some head scratches."

Ichimatsu internally screeched at himself, slamming his metaphorical head into the imaginary ground in frustration that he wasn't strong enough to say what he really wanted.

"Is that it?" (Y/n) playfully raised an eyebrow before lightly shrugging, "Sure, I'll give you my world-famous head scratches later on."

The internal berating slowly died down as he realized that they were still going to her house after dinner. He still had a chance to leave his virgin brothers in the dust.

After the nice dinner, Ichimatsu escorted (y/n) back to her home. The evening was cool and calm after the rain that happened during the meal, letting them take their time in getting home while engaging in more chatter. The roads narrowed a little more as they traveled from the city district into the residential area, Ichimatsu taking the spot between (y/n) and the road to keep her from being splashed by passing cars.

"--I had tried to reason with him about the uniforms, but he's so stubborn, saying that our company has 'an image to uphold and letting our customers witness that we honor our traditions', or some kind of bs," (Y/n) gritted her teeth in annoyance, the conversation partially continuing from the chat over the meal.

"He sounds like that kind of guy that likes his own values more than compromising on what makes most people happy," Ichimatsu commented.

"Right?" She turned to him with a look of agreement on her face, "I know that honor is a big thing for him, but come on!"

Ichimatsu heard the car running through the puddle before realizing what happened, quickly turning to shield (y/n) from the street water as much as he could. He heard her yelp in surprise, opening his eyes to see that -- despite his best effort -- he didn't block much.

The summer dress clung to her frame as water dripped from her hair, most of the fabric wet from the large puddle. Ichimatsu could feel the water soak into his own clothes, growling and turning towards the retreating car while raising a fist, flipping up the middle finger as hard as he could, "Fucking asshole!"

"Ichimatsu, it's all right," (Y/n) laughed a little, "We're almost to my place, so we can clean up there."

"Are you sure?" His yelling softened as he turned back to her, "I could still kill him."

"No manslaughter charges for you while we're still dating," (Y/n) laughed some more, the sound more genuine this time as she led them around the nearby corner and towards a small two-story house with its lights off. Taking out her phone from her purse, she used the screen light to help guide her key to the front door handle, hearing a satisfying 'click' before opening the door and flicking some of the light switches on.

Ichimatsu closed and locked the door behind him as he kicked off his nice shoes, looking towards (y/n) for further direction. She seemed to sense his eyes on her, turning back towards him after tossing her purse to the floor.

"There's a bathroom that you can use down the hall. I think there's a spare set of clothes that you're able to fit into in the closet, but if they don't fit then I can grab some of my oversized stuff," She pointed towards the bathroom he normally used whenever he was over. Her own private bathroom was upstairs next to her room, the house layout resembling something that could be found in the West.

"And the wet clothes?" Ichimatsu began to peel off his jacket, his annoyance slightly growing at the dirt that was left behind from the road.

"I'll throw them in the wash and take care of that after we're clean and dry," (Y/n) pulled off her shoes and moved upstairs, softly complaining about how she'd need to mop the floors again. Ichimatsu watched her ascend the staircase to make sure that she didn't slip and fall before he went to the bathroom, opening the closet door and pulling out a plastic storage container labeled 'SPARE'.

There wasn't much choice for what he had to wear, but realized that they would all fit him as he dug through the garments. Setting aside a blue tee shirt and gray sweatpants, he bit his bottom lip when he realized that he'd have to go commando until his clothes were dry.

Hopefully nothing would happen...

Grabbing a large towel from the top of the closet, Ichimatsu heard something hard slide off the shelf before realizing that he dragged something down with the towel, quickly catching a wooden box as the towel dropped to the ground. The box had handwritten letters carefully written out in a message on the top.

'To (Y/n),

Though the thought of you moving out of our home terrifies me, I know that you're pursuing your passion.

Love, your mother.'

Ichimatsu stared at the box, the wooden container carved with care as he found his fingers unlocking the small j-hook lock and pulling the lid upwards. A few layers of thin paper protected the cargo from hitting the inside of the box, and Ichimatsu told himself that he didn't need to look further, that his pants were creating puddles where he was standing. His right hand didn't seem to listen as it gently moved the papers aside to reveal a handcrafted kijo mask.

His mouth dried.

The majority of the mask was painted white with thin black lines detailing the wide sneer and narrowed eyes, the mouth painted a blood red color while the eyes were a sickly yellow.

Ichimatsu quickly shoved the papers back over the mask and closed the box, pushing it back into the closet and stripping off his clothes. His body began to wash itself as his mind stumbled over what he'd seen.

It was

definitely

a kijo mask and one he'd seen before in Kijo's promotional shoot. After that, the idol had switched to the red one with the movable jaw.

He dumped the bucket of water over his head to rinse out the shampoo and soap, climbing into the tub that had just filled up.

The box definitely had (y/n)'s name on it, but she didn't sound anything like Kijo did in the interviews. He hadn't even heard (y/n) sing -- he didn't know if she could. Ichimatsu could feel his face begin to flush as the thoughts danced in his head. The idol that he loved listening to, the one that had sung him through some hard times...was his

girlfriend

?

Ichimatsu sank low in the tub, submerging his mouth in the water as his eyes closed. Was he going to tell her what he'd just found out, or keep it a secret? (Y/n) hadn't mentioned anything to him, so maybe she didn't want him to know about it? If he was an idol, how would he approach the situation?

...he'd keep it hidden.

Opening his eyes and unplugging the tub, Ichimatsu climbed out and grabbed the towel from the floor. Drying off his body and roughly rubbing his hair, he climbed into the clean spare clothes before reaching down for

the wet clothes, pausing a few centimeters above them as a curious thought wormed its way into his head.

He wanted to see the mask again, to make sure that it was

really

(y/n)'s.

Taking in a deep breath through his nose, he let the towel hang over his head as he reached and took the box down again, carefully opening it once more and moving aside the paper. The same kijo mask stared up at him, the mouth in a mocking grin that seemed to taunt him.

Ichimatsu gently lifted the mask from the box, turning it around to see some kind of padding where the forehead would rest. The mask felt like it was hard-carved, some of the areas smoother than the others. It must be hand-painted too, with details meticulously painted by small brushes that required a steady hand. He lifted it up carefully to his face, feeling the wooden horns push the towel back a bit before the sides of the mask rubbed against his jaw.

It was too small to properly fit him and there were no mouth holes for him to breathe through, making the reason for the switch from the gifted mask to the singing one obvious. Pulling it away from his face, Ichimatsu carefully laid it back in the box, folding the papers over it and closing the lid once more as his breathing picked up a little.

As per the written letter from her mother, the mask belonged to (y/n) and because he'd seen the same one worn at a photo shoot...that had to make her Kijo.

Placing the box on the top shelf of the closet, Ichimatsu closed the closet door and grabbed his dirty clothes, leaving the bathroom and heading towards the laundry room to dump his clothes into the washer. Moving towards the living room as he absentmindedly rubbed the towel against his head, Ichimatsu sat on the couch and waited for (y/n) to be finished with her bath.

"You seem distracted."

Ichimatsu glanced over at the opposing end of the couch, seeing (y/n) resting her head on a propped up arm. The television was on and playing some kind of show that he agreed to, but neither of them seemed to be paying attention to it. Ichimatsu looked back towards the screen, watching silently as one of the anime characters kissed her love interest, tears falling from her cheeks as he lay dying on the ground with a sword through his chest.

"Just...wondering where my head masks are," His eyes widened at his slip up, "

Scratches!

Where my head

scratches

are..."

"Well, stop sitting in that weird position and come over then," (Y/n) sounded like she was smiling. Ichimatsu had kept a leg propped up between them so she couldn't see his groin in case it decided to have a mind of its own, slightly embarrassed at not wearing underwear in his girlfriend's house. He slightly groaned before he shifted positions, laying his head on (y/n)'s left leg while curling up on his right side.

Ichimatsu closed his eyes in contentment when he felt her nimble fingers start to run through his drying hair, the small nails scratching against his scalp.

"You said 'mask'."

His eyes opened wide, feeling his heart race, "...no, I said scratches..."

(Y/n)'s fingers continued their work against his head, "I had honestly forgotten that I put it in that bathroom. You'd think that a gift from a parent should be treated better."

Ichimatsu slowly lowered his eyes, resting a hand against her knee. Should he mention that he knows who she is?

"It looked like it was crafted with care."

"Yeah, it was," Her voice was soft, his ears picking it up with ease despite the show still running in the background, "The mask was a gift from my mother and father before I left home. I actually used to hang it in the living room before someone said that it creeped them out."

"Why don't you hang it up again?" He glanced up towards her, catching her eyes and seeing a faint smile on her lips.

"As much as I'd love to, I'm too worried that it'll fall and break."

"We've got an oni mask hanging in our common room, and it hasn't fallen down yet," Ichimatsu held the eye contact as her fingers kept running through his hair, "Maybe I can ask my dad how he hung it up there."

"That'd be an idea," (Y/n) leaned down, her lips connecting with his for a moment before pulling away, "It's much better than a closet."

"Can I ask you a question...?" Ichimatsu licked his top lip, savoring the minty chapstick flavor she used while mentally yelling at himself to

not

ask the question.

"What is it?" (Y/n) pulled her hands away so that he could ask without interruption.

"...are you....Kijo?"

Ichimatsu felt her flinch before looking up at her again, quickly scrambling to his knees when he saw a tear fall from her right eye. With the couch offering an uneven kneeling position, he simply looked at her, unsure of what to do or why she was starting to cry.

"Did I say something wrong? Was I not supposed to find out...?"

(Y/n) buried her face in her hands, the quiet sobs turning into a soft laughter that grew until she pulled her hands away, reaching out and grabbing Ichimatsu by the shoulders and bringing him close in a tight hug.

"...I would've

never

taken you for a heavy rock music fan--!"

He hesitantly gave her a hug back, "You're...not mad...?"

"Why would I be?" She hiccuped as one of her hands gave his scalp a partial massage, "Then that

was

you at the concert today...!"

"Heh...yeah..." Ichimatsu barely caught himself as (y/n) suddenly shifted her weight forward even more, angling himself to fall back onto the couch instead of the floor, "H-hey--!"

"I was going to tell you tonight...going to tell you that I wasn't a salarywoman and that I'd been in the music industry since I moved here..." (Y/n) took in shuddering breaths, a feeling of relief washing over her as the massive secret she'd been hiding was now out in the open, "To think that you were a fan...! I don't know how to feel!"

"...you can calm down, for one," Ichimatsu finally pried her off of him, glancing away when he realized that he was pinned to the couch underneath her, "...your tears are confusing."

"Sorry, sorry..." She sniffed and wiped away what was on her face with a sleeve, placing both of her hands against his chest afterwards.

"You...were fun to watch today..."

"Just fun?" A smile spread on (y/n)'s lips, "Not 'amazing'?"

Ichimatsu remembered the words he had told her as 'Kijo', that her performance was amazing to watch and that he couldn't wait for the next concert.

"...shut up..." In a bold move that surprised both of them, Ichimatsu put his right hand behind her head and brought it down to his lips, kissing her deeply as she adjusted her body on his. (Y/n) pushed against his chest, taking a deep breath before coughing a little, "...You could've gone a little longer. I heard those notes you hit today."

"Yeah, when I was prepared for them," She lightly pressed a hand against his face, a playful smile on her lips, "There's not much I can do when I'm taken off guard like that."

"Oh?" Ichimatsu laughed a little before narrowing his eyes, "Then show me what you can do when you're ready for it."

(Y/n) darkly laughed behind her lips, "Are you challenging me, mortal?"

He felt his body heat up as she drew closer, her lips pressing against his in another deep kiss as his breathing quickened, part of his mind worried about her finding out that he was developing a hard-on while the other part didn't care. Ichimatsu had to turn away first, his face flush as (y/n) pulled back with a victorious look on her face.

"Okay...you win."

She stayed on top of him, letting Ichimatsu recover before looking back down at him. He caught her eyes with a curious look, raising an eyebrow as if to ask what was wrong.

"You're...really okay with dating an idol?"

"Should I not be?"

"I don't know...I'm just worried that some of the hardcore fans will find out, and you'll be bullied for it," (Y/n) placed her right hand over his sternum,

his own hand covering hers in comfort.

"You think I'm worried about that? If I can handle my brothers, I can handle anything."

"Even Choromatsu?"

"Let him have his cat girl fantasies," His hand traced up her arm to rest against her cheek, "I've got my own demoness to worry about."

SchoolNurse!Ichimatsu and Student!Reader

Inspired by ara_jhoo's prompt.

"Hey, Human Disaster," One of my classmates called out my high school nickname, "You know that P.E. is going to be baseball, right?"

I withheld a groan as I pulled out the small bag holding my gym clothes, waiting until the boys left before changing clothes with the other girls.

"Mr. Matsuno really hates you, I guess," Another girl laughed out loud before the talk shifted to another topic. I pulled the white shirt over my head, tucking the ends into my shorts and tying my hair back into a ponytail. I hated wearing the gym clothes because they didn't offer much cover from the prying eyes that wanted to see my scar-riddled body.

I have been accident prone ever since I was a baby, drawing some kind of supernatural ire as I stumbled and staggered my way through life. I bruised easily and my skin was thinner than usual, allowing smaller things that never would have left a mark for someone else to cut me like I was paper. I didn't go out of my way to get hurt or anything, it just happened to find me.

For example, I had attended my good friend's soccer match when he was playing in the middle school team, sitting far enough from the sidelines to where I thought nothing would hit me. One of his team's kicks found my head, the wild ball nearly knocking me out. I supported his team virtually ever since, following their live streams of matches and cheering along with the physical crowd.

His name is Tayoka Hyoshiru and he is now the captain of the soccer team at our high school, wanting to finish our third year strong.

I didn't have the heart to join any physical sports...but the gym teacher was all about them.

I filed out of the classroom with the other girls, walking from the school to the baseball field and looked over at the gathering of boys, finding Tayoka among the throng of classmates. The gym teacher, Mr. Matsuno, stood by a rack of baseball bats and a large basket of baseballs, his usual smile resting on his lips as he regarded his class. The thick dark hair moved with the slight breeze as his eyes swept over the students.

"How many of you have played baseball before?" His loud voice echoed over the empty field, prompting a few students to raise their hands, "Well, it's time for the rest of you to play this fun game."

He handed out the bats to a few students, instructing the class on how to use them correctly before telling his class about the different positions on the field. My classmates joked about making me the catcher, since my inhuman back luck would draw every single ball past the hitter. I protested, not wanting to be in the line of fire from the pitcher who was on the school's baseball team.

Despite my insistence, my position of catcher was ensured and the game started between both classes. I was shoved into a squatting position by the pitcher and briefed on some of the throws that he was going to do, my mind questioning the words that he was using before I heard Mr. Matsuno call the start of the game.

I could only brace myself for the inevitable, the large glove not doing much to lessen the fast pitches that I somehow managed to catch. Taunts from both teams sounded out as the batter swung hard on a fast ball, the wood cracking out the hit as the ball continued to spin over the bat. I moved the glove to try and catch the rogue ball, the edge of the patch between the thumb and index finger of the glove barely touching the rotating ball before it slammed into my cheek. Turning my head at the last moment had saved my nose from a brutal hit by the ball, but I grunted as the ball lost all momentum and fell to the ground, feeling a red welt starting to swell near my cheekbone.

"(L/n)!" I heard Tayoka call out before I realized Mr. Matsuno was kneeling in front of me, his eyes partially narrowed at the welt that must've made itself obvious.

"You'll be fine," He huffed as he stood up, motioning for another pitch.

I quickly repositioned myself and brought the glove back up as a barrier between the ball and I. The welt felt like it was getting bigger and I certainly didn't

feel

fine...but I couldn't leave the class without Mr. Matsuno's permission.

When three opposing classmates were called out by Mr. Matsuno, the classes switched sides. Tayoka quickly moved from his position of first base to me, helping me up and tossing our gloves to the other team.

"That doesn't look so good," He glanced towards my cheek, noticing the bruising that was starting to form on my palm from the constant barrage of catches.

"It doesn't feel so good, either..." I groaned a little.

"Let me see if I can escort you to the nurse's office," He sent a wave towards me as he moved to Mr. Matsuno, his fingers pointing towards his cheek and hand. Mr. Matsuno glanced over to me and waved Tayoka off, a smile on the soccer captain's face when he came back, "Let's go."

Tayoka walked with me from the baseball field towards the school's nurse office on the first floor, chatting about something I didn't pay attention to to fill the silence between us. He was a nice friend to have, but I didn't feel like talking...not when my heart was thudding heavily in my chest with each step I took towards the nurse's office.

I never really had a crush on anyone until I met the high school's male nurse. He was one of Mr. Matsuno's sextuplet brothers that worked on the school staff and he was the only one that I really felt comfortable around. I

had curbed my own wants, though, knowing that it was wrong for a student to fall in love with a teacher...I had made a promise to myself that I was going to tell him how I really felt after I graduated in a few months.

It couldn't be considered wrong at that point, could it?

Tayoka knocked on the sliding door before pulling it open, revealing the nurse's office. Two beds lay plainly made and empty, the desk where Mr. Matsuno often sat devoid of his presence.

"Huh," He huffed as he helped me sit on one of the chairs along the far wall, turning to look through the supply cabinet that students could freely use, "I guess he's not here."

"Must be in a meeting or something..." I mumbled under my breath before I felt a sting on my cheek, flinching away before I realized that Tayoka had raised an alcohol pad to my face, wiping it clean of dirt or whatever else was on the ball's surface.

"Let's just get some cream and a bandaid on it," Tayoka tossed the pad away before going back to the cabinet, grabbing the aforementioned things, "You're lucky that it didn't hit your nose."

"I turned away because I had a feeling that's where it was going to hit," I sat patiently as Tayoka fussed over my cheek, handing me a bandaid when he had finished, "Thanks..."

"It's not as good of a job as Dr. Matsuno would've been able to do, but it's the most that I could do," He flashed a smile before moving towards the door, "We better get back to class before Mr. Matsuno comes hunting us down--"

The door slid open to reveal the slightly slouched figure of a lithe man, the white lab coat covering a dark purple button-up shirt tucked into dark gray slacks. The man's dark eyes narrowed slightly as they saw Tayoka reaching for the already-open door, his gaze shifting towards me still sitting on the chair.

"Tayoka Hyosiru and (L/n) (Y/n)," Dr. Matsuno's voice was gravelly, surprisingly low compared to his other brothers.

"Dr. Matsuno," Tayoka was quick to respond, "(L/n) hurt herself during gym class. I just did a small patch job where she was hit."

The doctor shuffled into his office, dropping the black clipboard tucked underneath his arm onto the desk before striding over to me, lowering his head to look at the bandaid. I held my breath to keep from breathing on him, watching as his eyes shifted down to my hand before motioning for me to let him see. I raised it up to him with the palm up, showing off the budding bruises that were splattered across the partially flat surface.

"She'll stay here for the remainder of class," Dr. Matsuno turned towards Tayoka, "If Mr. Matsuno has an issue with it, you can tell him to direct it to me."

"Yes, sir," Tayoka cast a glance at me before leaving the office, closing the door behind him as he left. Dr. Matsuno slouched over his desk to flip through the paperwork on its surface, casually lifting his head to look towards the cabinet that held the emergency ice packs. Taking one out from the cabinet and cracking it open, he held it out towards me and I gently took it, pressing it on my palm without direction.

"How many times does that make it this week, (l/n)?"

"Five, sir..." I was disappointed in myself. I knew of the rumor going around about me, that I always stepped into harm's way to go see Dr. Matsuno, "I don't mean for this to happen..."

He was silent as he sat down at his desk, pulling the paperwork from his clipboard and adding the sheets to the various piles. I hung my head low, mostly in shame. My heart was pounding furiously as I got a whiff of coffee, knowing that he was probably on break and it was more than likely cut short because I got hurt...

"Let's be thankful that it wasn't something worse," He cleared his throat as he dug through the papers, organizing the files before putting them away in

various files and drawers. I laughed nervously at his comment, my gaze locked on the ice pack that was cool against my palm.

"I'm sorry, Dr. Matsuno..."

"For what," He set down the papers he was looking at, shifting himself to look at me.

"For being so accident prone," I looked up at him and briefly held his eye contact before ducking my head back down, "I know that it's a bother when it happens so often."

Dr. Matsuno only gave a short hum in a neutral tone as he focused on putting the other papers away. The silence stretched until the chime for the end of the period rang out, freeing me from the chair. He didn't say anything as I left, but I felt my heart flutter as I walked by him.

The rest of the school day passed in a blur, my hand throbbing every now and then from the bruise and my cheek no longer aching from the swelling. I heard soft laughter ring out near the shoe lockers, the female voice growing louder as I opened my locker to put my school shoes away.

"Are you serious?"

"Totally! When I stopped by his office today, I slipped my letter onto his desk and he looked at me like he had found his lost love."

My hand faltered and dropped the outside shoe onto the ground, my bare sock hovering just above where it fell. I lowered my gaze towards the shoe and slowly slipped my foot into it, the familiar feeling of heartbreak nestling where I had felt some semblance of joy earlier.

I had forgotten that I wasn't the only one pining for Dr. Matsuno.

In fact, the whole group of sextuplet brothers had their own secret fangirl clubs that swore to protect the adults from thirsty young girls that overstepped their bounds. The same group that hovered over Dr. Matsuno

was the same group that had started those vicious rumors about my bad luck only existing to ensure that I was in his office every day.

"No way!" The girls continued chittering, "Yoko said that she was going to meet with Dr. Matsuno today to confess, so you may have a love rival."

"That's fine. Anyone is better than Human Disaster."

I flinched at the nickname, softly closing the locker door and heading out towards the school's front courtyard. Just a few more months and I'd be free of that nickname. A few more months and I'd give my confession to Dr. Matsuno.

The human disaster that I was racked up another thirty-one office visits in the remaining three months, staying as far away from potential threats as I could before succumbing to a bad event. Most of the injuries happened during gym class, while the others occurred randomly on school grounds.

I had practiced writing a letter to Dr. Matsuno, both thanking him for taking care of my injuries and proclaiming my feelings for him, but each draft of the letter never felt genuine. Going through a few different ideas of how to write 'I love you' to him, I just settled for a short letter that was anonymous.

It was better to get my feelings out and let him know that someone loved him then try to convince Dr. Matsuno that it was me who harbored these feelings for him. Let him think that the short letter came from his fan club...it was enough for me to write the bold words down.

Graduation day came faster than I expected it to, all of my classmates excited for the last bell of the day to sound and exploding with cheering when it finally happened. Girls and boys posed with their small groups of friends for pictures, laughing at the happy memories and crying at the realization that they were no longer going to see each other on a near daily basis. I slipped out of the classroom, the simple letter tucked safely in my jacket pocket as I began to head towards Dr. Matsuno's office.

My plan was to get into the room, place the sealed envelope on his desk, and leave before he came back.

It was a simple plan that had always worked for the female protagonists in the light novels I read, but I knew that it probably wasn't going to turn out the same way for me.

Not with

my

luck.

A gathering of girls stood in front of Dr. Matsuno's office, the door opened all the way and some girls were leaving without anything in their hands. The remaining girls left behind all had some sort of package in their hands, either a sealed envelope or small box.

Ducking around the closest corner near Dr. Matsuno's office, I collided with an unexpected wall. The collision was quickly followed by a scalding sensation on my face and left shoulder, the apology dying on my lips as I swallowed a scream. My hands covered my face, feeling a hot liquid cascade down my cheeks and start to soak the collar of my shirt.

I felt my wrist roughly grabbed at, dragging me forward as I tried to wipe off the hot liquid with the sleeve of my jacket, stumbling forward as the person pulled at my arm. I couldn't see where I was going, but heard a door close behind me before a gruff voice barked for me to remove my school uniform jacket. I blindly did so before the person lay a hand between my shoulder blades and pressed down, forcing me to bend over.

"Cold water."

It was my only warning before a gentle flow of water splashed up into my face, making me flinch before I relaxed a little. The hand removed itself from my back and I heard a pair of shoes shuffle around, different cabinets opening up and closing before I heard the person come back towards me.

"Dr. Matsuno," I tried to speak from under the cold water rinsing my face off.

"Here," I felt the hand pull up on the back of my collar, bringing me into a standing position before something soft was shoved into my hands, "Towel. Dry off and change."

I pressed the towel to my face, dabbing at it before trying to open my eyes when I lowered the absorbent towel, pressing it against my collar and shoulder. Dark brown stains spread through the pressed white uniform shirt, indicating that coffee had been spilled on me. I sucked in a gasp when I saw the sealed envelope in Dr. Matsuno's hands, my handwriting indicating that he was the correct recipient of the letter.

"Does it still hurt?" Dr. Matsuno wasn't even paying attention to the envelope in his hand, his dark eyes focused on my face and looking over it like it contained some great clue to a treasure, "Do you need some burn cream...?"

"No," I quickly answered while shaking my head, "I mean, it stings a little but not too badly."

"Go change," He motioned towards a small folded pile of clothes sitting on a chair in the corner, well within range of a barrier curtain. I pressed the towel to my face to hide the rising blush, quickly moving to the corner, closing the curtain, and pulling out a gym shirt and a pair of shorts that fit me. Using the towel to dry off completely, I tugged back the curtain to see Dr. Matsuno idly rub his thumb around the lip of his coffee cup while my letter sat on the table in front of him.

"...I can explain, Dr. Matsuno."

He merely lifted his head up towards me as I folded my soiled uniform over my forearm. I couldn't pull any kind of emotion from the look he was giving me.

"I...wanted to thank you for taking care of me while I was under your care at school, and I wanted to apologize for lying to you."

His eyebrow slightly lifted in an unspoken question.

I took in a breath through my nose as I felt my face grow hotter, "I think I'm in love with you..."

I wasn't sure what kind of reaction I was expecting from Dr. Matsuno, but it definitely wasn't the stare I was getting right now.

His normally hooded eyes were wide, the dark pupils contracted a little as he kept his focus on my face. His thumb had stopped its pacing around the mug's rim and time seemed to still as the silence grew between us.

This was a mistake...!

I should've just been quiet and just thanked him like I originally planned, letting him go home with the anonymous confession letter. I screwed my eyes shut before giving a deep bow.

"I'm sorry! Forget about what I said!" Pulling out of the bow, I rushed towards the door and slipped my fingers into the inward handle. A hand slammed down on the other door, preventing me from opening the sliding door. I recoiled from the loud noise, turning in place to put my back against the door and face a flushed Dr. Matsuno.

"That's not fair that you say that and try to leave immediately after..." He took a slow breath in, gently placing his other hand on the door behind me and slightly leaning over my form, "...without letting me have my say in this."

My blush returned tenfold, making the burn marks on my face and neck hurt a little as Dr. Matsuno seemed to gather his thoughts before dropping his hands to his sides.

"...I wouldn't mind taking care of you outside of school," His voice turned soft before he seemed to realize what he said, his words tensing up, "I'm...willing to give that small seed of love a chance to grow into a beautiful flower."

HighSchool!Ichimatsu and HighSchool!Reader

Inspired by atiqah_syazwina's prompt.

Ichimatsu tapped his fingers lightly against the length of his mechanical pencil, drumming out a rhythm in his head to a song he didn't know. His dark eyes glanced over towards the teenager sitting diagonally to his left, watching her fingers count out the mathematical problems quickly before writing something down on the sheet of paper in front of her. His eyes moved back to the paper laying flat on his desk, scanning over each question that he had filled out.

He knew that he had answered all of the questions on the test and that his answers were right, but Ichimatsu wanted to wait until

she

was finished. Shifting his gaze back towards the female student, he couldn't help but smile at her excited expression when she realized that she knew the formula to the problem she was working on.

His fingers ceased tapping on his pencil as he twirled it around his index finger before placing the lead against the paper, acting like he wasn't finished with the test. His eyes, however, never left the student.

Ichimatsu knew that if he made it obvious, then the teacher would catch him 'cheating', rubbing his left hand over his bangs and letting the thick fringe fall over his eyes. Her hands moved quicker now, the pencil scrawling something on the bottom of the page before Ichimatsu recognized her testing habit kicking in. She hovered the pencil tip over every question, rereading the problem in her mind and following her own written out work to see if the answer was correct. His lips pulled back into a calm smile as he

kept watching her hands move over the paper, focusing on the pencil as it skirted over the typed problems.

The female student was (y/n), a friend he had known since middle school and someone he considered himself to be really close to. She never did well on the tests, though. In fact, she was below average in her scores constantly, but Ichimatsu attributed that to her mind not really capable of applying what she'd learned to stagnant paperwork. She could work out math and science brilliantly on the board while talking about it, but give her a pencil and paper, force her to shut up and not talk through her thought processes, and she would almost fail every time. (Y/n) was a puzzle to Ichimatsu, but he didn't care too much about it.

She always asked him for help studying things, and he was always willing to oblige...as long as it wasn't at his house. The small house always grew too rowdy for his studying tastes, so they either stayed in the library after school or went to her home.

Ichimatsu raised his head a little when he saw (y/n) put her pencil down and flip the paper over, following her lead and giving her a small thumbs-up when she glanced back at him. This was the last test of the day, but with finals coming up, he knew there'd be more studying to do on the horizon. He'd have to ditch his friends to spend more time in the library, and most of him wished that (y/n) would be joining him.

The chime signaling the end of the school day sounded and most of the class burst out into groans, the students quickly standing up and stretching before grabbing their school bags. While his classmates filed out of the room, Ichimatsu slung his bag over his shoulder and walked over to (y/n)'s desk, laying a hand against it to grab her attention.

"Ichimatsu," (Y/n) looked up at him, a grateful smile on her face as she shifted in her seat to face him, "How well did you do?"

"I think I got most of it right," He looked to his right with a sly smile, a blush rising on his cheeks as she settled her right hand next to his, catching her pinky with his thumb and keeping her hand there.

"You're a horrible liar," She laughed, Ichimatsu not missing the dusting of pink on her face as he lightly rubbed his thumb over her pinky before slipping away from her hand, "I know that you aced the test like usual."

"You never know," He shrugged as he pulled both of his hands into his uniform jacket pockets, "There was that trick question on number four."

"...that was a trick question...?"

Ichimatsu's smile grew wider as her face paled slightly, seeing her eyes go over mental notes before playfully shoving his arm, her flustered look bringing a laugh to his lips.

"Stop messing with me!"

"I can't help it, (y/n). You're too cute to not mess with."

"Stop..." (Y/n) whined a little, a small laugh catching in her throat before she started putting her test supplies away in the school bag, "Are we going to the library today? I wanna make sure that I have everything ready in my mind for the finals."

"That's in a month," Ichimatsu scoffed a little, lowering his eyes to catch her right hand flinching back like something had nicked it, "(Y/n)?"

"Ah..." She sucked in a breath between clenched teeth, shaking her hand back and forth before slipping her index finger between her lips. Ichimatsu tensed a little, reaching down and pulling her hand from her mouth.

"Don't do that," He shifted his grip on her hand, gently pulling her from her chair and leading her out into the hallway, "We'll get a bandage from the nurse's office."

"I just got pricked by one of my safety pins, Ichimatsu," (Y/n) followed along, "It's nothing to be worried about."

"Maybe it was, but we're not supposed to lick wounds on our skin. Too much harmful bacteria in our saliva," Ichimatsu looked back towards her before following her arm down to her hand in his, a flush rising on his face

as he instantly let go when he realized the position they were in, "Let's...just get it flushed and find a bandage."

With a small band-aid wrapped around the pad of her index finger, (y/n) and Ichimatsu took their time walking back to their classroom, the conversation jumping from topic to topic as they tried to figure out a good study schedule for them to meet up in the next few weeks. Careful to close the safety pin that had somehow become unclipped, (y/n) and Ichimatsu agreed that the next study session would be at her home in the next few days.

"Thanks for having me," Ichimatsu called out as he was invited inside (y/n)'s house, or rather her parents' home. Removing his shoes in the front area, he glanced around at the pictures displayed in the hallway, seeing happy and cheerful memories of (y/n) with her parents in different places.

"Come on upstairs," His ears perked up at her voice, "I'm just tidying up my room."

"I'll bring some tea in a moment, Ichimatsu," Her mother gave a gracious smile as she moved from the hallway into the kitchen, having been the one that let him in.

"Sounds wonderful. Thank you," Ichimatsu adjusted his book bag over his shoulder before walking up the staircase, his sock feet padding gently against the hardwood. He had been here many times before, and preferred being here as to his noisy home with his five other identical brothers. If they knew of him being here with a girl, he'd never hear the end of it.

Striding over to a room on the left side of the upstairs hallway, Ichimatsu waited patiently outside the partially opened door as he heard (y/n) mutter to herself inside. There was a lot of movement inside before she opened the door wider, the partially frustrated look on her face instantly falling away when she realized he was standing right outside.

"Ichimatsu! Oh, geez...you could've come in."

"It would be rude to walk in if you were busy doing something," He playfully shrugged his shoulders as he sat near the low table (y/n) had obviously cleared off, "Besides, I wasn't going to play into the trope of finding you changing."

"I wasn't changing, dummy."

"Lots of young adult novels would say otherwise," He flipped open his book bag and started pulling out a few different notebooks with school subject labels, his pencil case, and a sturdy eraser, "This

is

a study session between a male and female friend, after all. Anything could happen."

"Yeah...if anything

could

happen between us, it would've happened already," (Y/n) pulled her own notebooks from the school bag leaning against her study desk, grabbing a few loose pencils from the desk and laying everything gently on the table, settling into a spot right across from Ichimatsu.

They quizzed each other on different subjects, with Ichimatsu getting most of his answers right while (y/n) had to take her time with her answers. He was patient with her, watching her hands as she moved her fingers while talking through the problem, each poke and prod they made in the air connecting to some bigger picture that only she could see. Her mother brought up the freshly made tea throughout the study session, supplying them with rice crackers and other sweets to help keep their minds awake while dredging through the heavier subjects.

(Y/n) called the first break after getting several questions wrong in a row, frustration clearly written on her face as her eyes scanned through the English textbook.

"Ugh...this is so dumb!" She set the open textbook down on the table, "Why do I need to learn a language that I'm never going to use?"

"Because maybe you'll get thrown into a situation where you need to deal with an English-speaking tourist," Ichimatsu snapped a rice cracker between his teeth, "Not every tourist can be expected to speak Japanese, so we should make sure that we can

try

to accommodate the lazy asshole."

"Ichi!" (Y/n) gawked at his words, drawing a hum from him as he shifted his gaze from the book to her stunned face.

"Was what I said wrong?"

"No...but..." Her face shifted from stunned to confused before settling on shame, "I mean, it would be nice to hold a conversation with them..."

"There's your reason. It's not that hard to speak," Ichimatsu gave a knowing smirk as he quickly switched languages, "<

Besides, we learned most of this throughout middle school and what we're learning is just reinforcing the grammar. If we learn to speak it fluently, then it only increases our chances of finding a well-paying job that requires multi-lingual skills.

>"

Ichimatsu watched in satisfaction as (y/n) tried to listen to him, her frustration growing ever more on her face before she simply laid her head down on the table with a thud.

"Ichi...I hate you sometimes..." Her words were smothered between the table and her clothes.

"Someone has to..." He finished off the rice cracker before drinking some of the cooling tea, picking up his pencil and focusing back on his chemistry

textbook.

Silence filled the room for a few moments before (y/n) shifted her head to lay on its side.

"I wonder if Karamatsu would be good at English..."

"If he wasn't so shy, then probably," Ichimatsu took another sip from his tea.

"Speaking of..." (Y/n) fully lifted her head from the table, picking up her pencil and playing with it between her fingers, "...are they sick at all?"

"'They'? My brothers?" Ichimatsu paused in his scribbling, catching and holding her gaze.

"Yeah. I overheard that they'd been out sick for the last week," She bit down on her lower lip a little bit, breaking their stare and focusing on her pencil, "You're not sick...are you?"

"If I was, then I wouldn't be here."

"Would you...mind if I walked back to your house with you? I have a care package that's ready to be given to them," She stood up from the table, drawing Ichimatsu's attention as she moved towards her closet to pull out a large paper bag, "It's got some ice packs, tissues, and I even made some soup for them that's in the fridge."

"That's so nice of you, (y/n)," Ichimatsu gave her a soft smile, "I'm sure they'll enjoy it, but I don't want you going near them. Can't risk you catching what they have. I'm immune to it since I'm too dumb to get sick."

"Stop," (Y/n) laughed a little, "You're not dumb, Ichimatsu."

He laughed along with her, accepting the care bag from her hands and promising that he'd deliver the bag himself.

Ichimatsu announced his arrival when he got home, hearing silence as his response while he went to the kitchen, opening the fridge and putting the soup (y/n) had given him inside. Bringing out the tissues and ice bags from the care package, he set the ice bags aside to be ready to use before grabbing the tissues and moving upstairs.

"You're all so lucky that (y/n) thought of you guys," Ichimatsu slid open the shared bedroom door to see his five brothers still laying in the futon, "Ah...oops. I'll just leave these here..."

Quietly setting the tissue boxes down just inside the doorway, he checked in with his parents to see them still resting under their duvet. This year's flu had been rougher than normal, but Ichimatsu considered himself lucky that his immune system was strong enough to fight it off. Yes, he hadn't felt like himself for a few days, but it cleared right up after he slept the day away.

Setting a timer to start warming up the soup for them all to eat, he stopped by the small pot near the back door. The beautiful colored petals reminded him of (y/n)'s eyes, catching the last bits of sunlight before it disappeared behind their fence. Ichimatsu felt his face heat up as he remembered holding her hand earlier that day.

Maybe he'd tell her how he really felt about her tomorrow...

Ichimatsu bolted up from the couch as a scream pierced the night, his heart beating like a drum in fear as he threw off the blanket covering him. The scream had sounded close.

Careful to not disturb his brothers, Ichimatsu stared down the staircase to see a trembling form crumpled into a pile, the darkness obscuring their features but the familiar voice calling out for help.

(Y/n)...what was she doing here so late?

"I-Ichimatsu...!" Ichimatsu quickly vaulted down the staircase, kneeling next to her and bringing her close in for a comforting hug as her frame shook with fear. She seemed to have a change of mind as she suddenly tried to shove him away, her wide eyes easy to see in the dark.

"Shh, (y/n)...It's all right," He tried to comfort her, "What are you doing in my house?"

"Why do you have

arms

?!" She pushed him away, crawling on her backside as she pointed towards the potted flower from earlier. His eyes softened as he looked back at her.

"Because they were beautiful."

His answer stilled her, widening her eyes even more as she clutched her hands to her chest.

"I warned you to stay away, though...(Y/n), why didn't you listen to me?" Ichimatsu stood up, his dark eyes regarding her form as she tried to crawl away from him, easily catching up and grabbing her left arm. She screamed in fear as he roughly pulled her up to her feet, "My family is sick and sleeping to get better, yet you're interrupting that."

"Ichimatsu, please! I won't say anything! Don't hurt me!" (Y/n) cried out as he dragged her towards the kitchen, her voice growing higher as they passed another few flower pots with hands, the fingernails painted with red, blue, and green polish, "Ichi!"

"I just wanted you to do something simple..." He furrowed his eyebrows in disappointment, dragging her arm towards the kitchen counter and holding it down while reaching for the thick butcher knife, "We could've been happy as friends...maybe even more..."

"Ichimatsu, you're sick!" She sounded like she was struggling to breathe between her tears, "I can get you help! Please, don't hurt me..."

"If you were really my friend, though...you would've just obeyed my one simple rule," Ichimatsu looked over his shoulder to see (y/n)'s fear-stricken face, tears pouring from her eyes as she tried to push against his hand on

her arm, freezing for a moment as the knife caught the moonlight, "But don't worry...you'll live with me forever in my garden."

Gunslinger!Ichimatsu x Cheating!Reader

(Inspired by 'Over the Hills and Far Away' cover by Patty Gurdy. Song is considered the 'prequel' to this one-shot.)

He barely thanked the carriage driver as he got off, flipping him a coin for passage before pressing his brimmed hat further down onto his head. The dusty streets were worse than the last time he was here, proving that the harsh summer season was well underway. The weather today wasn't hotter than any other day, but the sight of the dust clouds stirred up by any foot, hoof, or wheel on the road made his mouth dry, urging him towards the saloon to grab something to drink after the long ride back home.

"What will ya have?" The bartender didn't look up from arranging something underneath the countertop, the man taking advantage of his lack of awareness and pulling the brim of his hat down a little further before sitting at one of the stools.

"Whiskey," A clink of coin drew the bartender's attention, the well-dressed man standing up and fetching the ordered drink and glass. After pouring an ample amount into the stout glass, the bartender slid it down towards the new arrival.

"Just passing through?"

"Only a ghost looking for a place to haunt," The man gave a weak laugh, downing the drink in one swallow before wincing as if it was stronger than he anticipated, setting the glass down and sliding it back towards the bartender for a refill.

"Well, if you're looking for a place to live," The glass was refilled with whiskey and set back in front of the man, "You'll need to talk to the

governor about that. There should be a few homes available since a businessman is looking to purchase the lots."

"Thanks for the hint," The man downed the second glass as easily as the first, setting down a few coins before standing up from the stool and leaving the saloon.

A gust of dry wind blew his long coat about him, the dark color not seeming to phase him as the sun instantly warmed the fabric with its intense heat. Readjusting the brimmed hat, the man let his eyes wander the main street, watching the people and livestock head towards their various destinations before spotting something that interested him. He cautiously moved down the boarded walkway, avoiding obstacles while his eyes remained focused on what caught his attention.

The building was clearly marked as a Pony Express station, the local hub for sending and receiving messages through a rudimentary courier service. The doorway was wide open to the elements, allowing the couriers easy access and ensuring that their parcels were delivered that much faster.

"--ust want to have this letter delivered, postmaster," A feminine voice reached the man's ears as he found a comfortable position to watch the woman through the open doorway.

"You've been busy, Mrs. (L/n)," The postmaster commented as he quickly calculated the postage needed to send the letter she handed over to him, "How much longer will you keep sending these letters?"

"It's for my peace of mind," Mrs. (L/n) responded, offering a gentle smile before turning her head to her left, looking at something that was blocked from the man's view by her dress, "I made someone a promise and I intend to keep it for as long as I'm alive."

"The sheriff isn't against you doing this?"

"My husband knows."

The man's heart thudded in his chest, his right hand reaching up and pressing down on his necktie to make sure the organ stayed right where it was, feeling the nervous thing prance about like a newborn foal in his ribcage. He knew exactly where those letters were going, but knew that there wouldn't be anyone to read them when they arrived at their destination.

Turning away to hide his face, the man watched as Mrs. (L/n) stepped out of the station with her right hand clasped around something hanging on her neck while her left hand reached down to take the grasping hand of a young boy. His eyes widened and found himself staring at the child, taking in the dark hair that gleamed like a raven's wing in the sunlight and the slightly disinterested expression that almost mirrored his own.

Gritting his teeth, the man turned away from mother and son and quickly walked towards one of the larger buildings on the main road, the sign and flags marking it as government property.

Taking long strides through the doors, the man walked up to the receptionist's desk and asked to speak with someone about purchasing some property in the town. Told to wait for a little while, he removed his hat and tried to tame the unkempt hair that always seemed to have a mind of its own, running his fingers through it a few times before giving up completely and shoving the hat back down on it.

"Well, here's the property you were interested in, Mr--"

"Ichimatsu," The man didn't look at the realtor as he fumbled with the keys to the front door, casting a long look over the house that he was wanting to buy -- the same house that was his just over ten years ago. When the front door was unlocked, the realtor let Ichimatsu walk in first, spouting off different interests that the house had while Ichimatsu walked around the place.

Nothing was touched since he was forced to leave, the furniture remaining in the layout that he loved. Everything needed a good cleaning, but that was a mere drop in the bucket for him.

"I'll buy it," He unfastened his coin bag from the side of his belt and held out the correct amount to the realtor.

"Oh...uh, all right," The realtor took out the folded papers from underneath his arms, licking a pen quill to moisten the ink before scratching out his name on the bill of property. Ichimatsu signed his name before laying the currency in front of the realtor, "Well, it's been a pleasure, Mr. Ichimatsu. Enjoy your new house."

Taking the money and leaving the premises quickly, the realtor scurried off as Ichimatsu stood tall in his home.

"Now...let's get this game started..."

"Welcome home," I called out as I saw my husband step through the doorway into the kitchen area, setting down the last bit of food before helping my son, Ichiro, into his seat. Withholding a shocked cry, I looked behind me as the man brought me close to him, pressing himself against me while resting his chin against my shoulder, "Karamatsu?"

"Just enjoying the moment, (y/n)," Karamatsu's breath was on my neck as his voice rumbled against my back, "It's been a busy year."

"I thought that Osomatsu was helping you with the rougher cases," I pulled away from my husband's touch, turning to look at him as he stood at his full height, "He's your bailiff."

"Yes, he is," He began unfastening the two pistol holsters strapped around his waist, laying them down carefully on a table near the doorway before starting to unbutton his vest. His long coat and hat had already been discarded, "But there's been rumors of an unsavory character rolling into town today."

"Since when has the sheriff started believing in rumors?" I set down a plate for Karamatsu to use, serving him some food as Ichiro began to chow down on his meal.

"It's not the rumors that I'm worried about; it's the person that they're about," He settled into his chair and began eating some of the meal, his dark eyes flicking up to me as I sat down between him and our son, "A criminal that used to live in this town."

"Well, as long as he doesn't do anything illegal, then you shouldn't have any reason to worry about him, right?"

"Let's hope that he stays in his dark corner..."

"What hole did

you

crawl from."

Ichimatsu barely glanced behind him, the brim of his hat casting a deep shadow over his eyes as he glared at the man leaning against the outer wall of the general goods store.

"You should know that better than anyone else, Osomatsu," Ichimatsu continued to walk forward, the box that was resting on his right shoulder becoming uncomfortable with the heavier than usual weight.

Osomatsu hadn't changed much of his attire since the two had last seen each other ten years ago, the black waist holster replaced by a tanned leather holster as a polished silver star-and-shield rested high on the left lapel of his outer jacket. The sight of the silver government badge caused Ichimatsu to narrow his eyes, his lips pulling taut in a snarl before tearing his eyes off of the official law enforcement badge, continuing to walk towards his home before the officer stepped in front of him.

"I know why you're here, scum," The bailiff growled, not touching the darker clothed man but causing him to step back all the same, his dark eyes narrowing.

"Since when was it a crime to try and start a new life?" Ichimatsu responded, his patience wearing thin as the box became annoying to hold.

"It is when you were told to never return," Osomatsu took another step towards Ichimatsu, the man shuffling back to keep the bailiff from touching him, "You've even bought property here, which means you're planning on staying for more than just a few days."

"I intend to take care of some business before I move on," Ichimatsu tried side-stepping around the intimidating man, gritting his teeth when the other showed no signs of being brushed off easily.

"Planning on committing

another

robbery?"

"Back off and let this free man go home," The ex-criminal snarled, glowering at the bailiff from underneath the brim of his hat, fury resting deep within his eyes. Osomatsu didn't move for a short moment, taking a breath and stepping aside to let Ichimatsu pass.

"I'll be informing the sheriff of your presence here."

"Tell the whole damn town if that's your fancy," Ichimatsu spat in disgust, taking long strides towards his home before slamming the box down on the floor near the kitchen. Anger boiled in his veins as his right hand clenched itself around the grip of his ebony revolver, using everything in his willpower to not draw the weapon.

The bailiff Osomatsu...the same one that had framed him ten years ago by stealing one of Ichimatsu's pistols and leaving it at a crime scene that Ichimatsu was never at. Ten years had barely changed the man that had smiled as he was dragged to the rack for a verdict, but Ichimatsu wasn't sure if that was a blessing or a curse.

Osomatsu had mentioned telling the sheriff that he was here, which only meant that he hadn't climbed the ranks of the local law enforcement...and that would be a problem if someone different was the sheriff.

He had to start his game quickly before Osomatsu closed in on his plans.

"Karamatsu, I -- Ah, Mrs. (L/n), I'm sorry to intrude," A familiar voice called out as the person opened the front door, my son squeaking in fright as he ran to hide his face in my dress. I looked up from the drying herbs to see a breathless Osomatsu take a few steps into the house, taking his hat off and resting it against his chest as he offered me a courteous nod.

"If you need Karamatsu, he's currently occupied out back but will be inside momentarily," I gave him a weak smile in return, "Since you're charging into the house without so much as a 'howdy-do', then it must be urgent."

"It pertains to the rumors that we've been hearing," Osomatsu started waving his hat like a fan as he caught his breath.

"In regards to the criminal? Has he done something wrong already?" I strung a clump of herbs together before looping the string around an exposed nail, letting the herbs air dry. Gathering Ichiro in my arms, I lifted him up and moved to a rocking chair before rearranging my dress and sitting down. Ichiro kept looking behind him to gaze at Osomatsu, the bailiff nearly staring back before looking up towards me with a smile.

"Not at all, but I feel like you'll be much safer if you stay inside the house."

"So, he's a danger to women?"

"We're not sure yet. The reports from when he served time in prison are still coming in," Osomatsu shook his head a little before letting the hat stop fanning his face, "He's a volatile man."

"I see," I lowered my eyes to look at Ichiro, my son meeting my gaze before falling forward against my chest as his hands clasped at my shoulders,

"Then I will stay inside unless I absolutely need to go buy something for the house."

"I'm sure we can arrange for someone to gather any effects that you'll need."

"Osomatsu, you're here?" Karamatsu called out as he strode into the house from the back door, "Is there an urgent matter?"

"Yes, sheriff. I'll tell you about it as we go to the station house," Osomatsu quickly snapped to attention, putting his hat on before walking out the front door. Karamatsu heaved a sigh before looking over at me.

"Promise you'll be okay?"

"I'm used to this, Karamatsu," I offered a smile, "Go do your job."

I watched as my husband geared himself up before leaving the home, closing the front door behind him as he went.

My curiosity took hold of me as I grabbed the small shopping basket, slipping the looped handle into the crook of my arm while I took Ichiro's hand in my free hand.

Intending on just stopping by the general goods store for some salt, I felt like I was being watched as I entered the building. I had felt the same thing yesterday at the mail station, but pushed the feeling aside as Ichiro demanded my attention, his finger pointing at some hard candies that he loved to suck on. Tossing a few pieces into the basket, I placed some rock salt in as well.

"Will this be all for you, ma'am?" The young shopkeeper asked in a friendly tone.

As I opened my mouth, another voice joined mine, "Just one more thing."

I looked down as something was tossed into the basket from my right, the item being an expensive block of candied chocolate. Switching my glare up to the person that had nearly doubled my bill, my jaw went slack as I met the familiar dark hues from years past.

The man closed his eyes when our gazes met, directing his attention back to the shopkeeper and pulling out a few banknotes, "Keep the change."

I was roused from my stupor by my son pulling out some of his chosen candy from the basket, blinking a few times to see the man from my past start to walk out the door. Thanking the shopkeeper and grabbing both basket and child, I walked as quickly as I could after him, my heart racing in my chest as I tried to verify who he was.

"Wait...!" His dark coat disappeared behind the stores across the road, my feet carrying me towards the turn he made with Ichiro in tow. I rounded the corner to see the man lower his brimmed hat below his eyes, casting a long shadow on his face as he leaned against the back of the building, breaking some of the chocolate off with his teeth.

"Who...who are you?" I stared at what I could see from his face, watching as he finished the chocolate in his mouth before looking over in my direction.

"I'm not sure how to answer that, Mrs. (L/n)," His gruff voice sounded strained, like he had been screaming for the past few years, "I used to live here a long time ago, knew of a young woman that looked like you...even comforted her when she needed it."

My face grew hotter as he spoke, watching as he slowly tilted his hat up until we were looking into each other's eyes.

"She even shared the same last name as you. Wrote to me throughout the past ten years."

"Ichimatsu...!" I let the basket drop to the ground, rushing towards the man with open arms. He quickly enveloped me in a hug, pressing me close to his chest as his hands spread wide over my back, "I thought they weren't releasing you until next month...!"

"I was, but I got out on account of 'good behavior'," His breath was hot on my ear, "I've missed you so much, (y/n)..."

We held each other for a moment longer before remembering ourselves, quickly pulling apart and adjusting our clothing. I rubbed my face to get rid of the blush, looking back to Ichiro to see him etching something into the dirt.

"Ah...Ichimatsu, this is my son, Ichiro," Seeing the man from my past and my son nearly side-by-side reminded me of what happened ten years ago, "He's also the son of

Karamatsu

."

"I see..." Ichimatsu tipped his hat all the way back before squatting next to Ichiro, holding out the candied chocolate in front of him, "Here you go, kid. Promise to not tell dad about it?"

Ichiro merely hummed his agreement before tearing open the package of chocolate, the piece that Ichimatsu had bitten into already broken off.

"Are...you the one that has my husband and the bailiff stressed out?"

"It's possible."

"Why?" I resisted taking a step closer to him.

"I've got a few things that I want to wrap up here before I move on."

"You're...not going to stay?"

Ichimatsu seemed to flinch at my words, my heart falling down into my gut as a small frown pulled at my lips. Me wanting him to stay was wrong, especially since I was a married woman of nine years now.

"Do you know of anything that happened ten years ago?"

"Not really...I was only told that you became involved with a robbery and were charged for it," I wrung my hands together a little, remembering the

odd timing of the crime, "Osomatsu was the one to lead you away...and Karamatsu became sheriff shortly after."

"Then there's only one thing I need to take care of," The tone of his voice drew my attention, as if he was a man that was ready to die.

"Ichimatsu, what are you going to do?"

"Just play a game," The smirk that rested on his face contrasted the anger broiling in his eyes, "Pretend you didn't see me, (y/n), and I'll be gone from your mind before you realize."

"I don't want to forget you," I clenched my fists together, "You're a dear friend...no, you're more than a friend to me, Ichimatsu. You were there when I needed a shoulder to lean again, someone that I could talk to when I just wanted someone to listen to me..."

"That role is reserved for your

loving

husband, (y/n)."

"What happened ten years ago is still

happening now

, Ichimatsu," I stated firmly, the anger in his dark hues falling away to shock, "If this is what marriage is...then I don't want it anymore."

"(Y/n)..." Ichimatsu warned, his hand lowering the brim over his face, "Don't say anymore...or I'll do something we'll both regret..."

"I've never regretted what I've done with you--" I whispered, looking back at Ichiro who was still drawing in the dirt with chocolate stuffed into his mouth.

"Don't--"

"I only regret what I've allowed to happen to me."

Ichimatsu bit his bottom lip in frustration before taking long strides towards me, pulling his hat off and grabbing my left upper arm. I stayed still while he pressed himself close to me, our lips connecting in a kiss as his hat acted as a barrier between us and the outside of town. His fingers slid up my arm to caress my neck, gently pushing my jawline up to tilt my head to the side as he leaned down over me.

The kiss was full of desire, of want and need. It was the same kiss that he gave when he was on top of me, plowing deep while I was turned into a mewling mess underneath him. Our sweat had stained the sheets of mine and Karamatsu's bed, my fiance away from the house for an extended trip.

Ichimatsu's lips trembled against mine before he pulled away, quickly placing the hat back on his head as his other hand covered his mouth, the dark hues staring at the building next to us like he had just fallen into a trap.

"Ichimatsu, I--"

"It's best if you stay loyal to your family, (y/n)...what we did ten years ago was a mistake that I don't intend to repeat," He completely turned away from me, his voice sounding like he didn't even believe it himself, "You're a wonderful woman and wife to the sheriff and I don't want to tarnish that."

"I may be a wonderful wife, but Karamatsu holds no love for me as a woman...we haven't even consummated our wedding vows," My hands clung to the sides of my dress, looking down at the ground to see the tips of my shoes barely peeking out from underneath the hem of the long dress.

"Then...?"

I looked up to meet Ichimatsu's stunned gaze, his eyes switching to look at Ichiro before settling on my face. His eyelids lowered in disapproval, both hands falling away from his head.

"(Y/n), we

can't

--"

"I know that you and Karamatsu were best friends--"

"No, (y/n)," Ichimatsu cut off my sentence, grinding the heel of his boot into the dirt as he spun to face me, the tails of his coat flaring out as our eyes met, "One man betrayed me ten years ago and that man will pay for what he's done. You're the one that will be scrutinized if our prior relationship is ever found out while Karamatsu will be viewed as the honest husband with a harlot for a wife."

"Momma?" Ichiro called out, his hands tugging on my dress as his chocolate-smeared face looked up at me. I sighed and picked him up, bringing out my handkerchief and wiping what I could before shifting my focus towards Ichimatsu.

"I know that it's been ten years, Ichimatsu...but my heart pounds like a nervous dove when I see you still," Reaching down and grabbing the basket, I start heading towards the main road through the space between the buildings, "It hasn't done that for the

other

men in my life..."

Ichimatsu's grip on his hat grew tighter as he stared at the floorboards underneath his feet, glaring at the wooden planks like they had offended him greatly.

He had messed up.

The only person he didn't want to know that he was around now knew he was back in town, even professed that her youthful love to him was still true.

He gritted his teeth harshly before throwing the hat down onto the nearby table harshly, leaning down and gripping the sides as he took in deep breaths to try and calm down.

Ichimatsu would've been lying to himself if he said that he wasn't happy to hear that (y/n)'s heart still pined for him ten years later, but now he didn't know how to proceed with his plans. His trigger finger itched to be used for the man that dragged his name through the dirt and mud, but Ichimatsu didn't want (y/n) to become more involved than she already was.

His eyes burned with hatred as he glared at the pile of opened letters, all of them written by (y/n) while he was serving his sentence, his resolve growing with each heartbeat.

Tomorrow by dawn, the bailiff would be dead.

"Karamatsu, are you sure that (y/n) will be fine with me taking care of your boy?" Osomatsu slightly raised an eyebrow as Ichiro laughed while reaching up for his hat, the sheriff having placed the kid in his arms, "I've still got a few things to take care of that are...a little more important than babysitting."

"She's been feeling a little under the weather since yesterday, so I think it'll be nice for her to have some respite from her motherly duties," Karamatsu smiled as he ruffled Ichiro's hair, "Besides, you've said yourself that you wouldn't mind watching over him once in a while."

"Yeah, when I didn't have a full docket," Osomatsu muttered under his breath before adjusting his grip on the kid, resting him high above the pistol holster, "Well, I'll take care of him until you yell for me to give him back. There's a few things that I can do that won't put him in the line of fire."

"I'll take care of some of your assignments in exchange," Karamatsu closed the front door behind him as he walked out onto the porch, looking at the dark horizon that was starting to grow in vibrant pinks and oranges, "Another beautiful sunrise..."

Osomatsu strode through the dark streets, Ichiro resting against his shoulder as the bailiff turned down a smaller avenue towards the house that was bought by a ghost of the past. Carefully moving towards the darkened porch, the sunrise started to illuminate the sky with brighter colors and the bailiff froze. Instantly drawing his revolver and spinning on his heel, Osomatsu glared at the figure aiming a revolver right back at him.

"Thought so," The bailiff's glare never left the offender as his lips stretched wide into a smirk, "Put that iron away before the sheriff finds your corpse. Wouldn't want his missus to mourn your death, would we."

"Set the boy down," came the response. The figure didn't take a step closer.

"Sorry, but can't," Osomatsu lifted Ichiro to press his cheek against the boy's head, the youngster having fell back against against the bailiff's shoulder, "I was told to babysit this kid and I'm pretty confident that you're not going to shoot at me as long as I'm holding him...Ichiro is your spawn, after all."

There was silence from the other gunslinger, boosting Osomatsu's confidence a little more.

"Put away your iron, Ichimatsu...or your other gun will be found at the scene of a murder most foul," He narrowed his eyes, motioning with his revolver to set the weapon aside, "We wouldn't want innocent blood to be spilled before the day even starts."

"How did you know."

"If you're talking about the kid, anyone who

really

knows our lovely sheriff would put two-and-two together in regards to the brat. He suffers from something that deprives a cowboy of his pride, but it's not something that the lovely little (y/n) knew about..." Osomatsu maintained his glare at Ichimatsu, the dark-clothed man no longer hidden in

the shadows as the sun slowly peeked over the horizon to reveal the ebony revolver aimed at the bailiff's chest, "Weren't you his best friend?"

"I was, but I was also (y/n)'s friend," Ichimatsu's gaze flicked down to the long-familiar dark revolver in Osomatsu's hands, his eyes widening a little before snapping his focus back to the bailiff, "I knew it..."

The smirk grew on Osomatsu's face, "Oh, does the ghost know about the affairs of the living now?"

"It wasn't just Karamatsu that (y/n) was talking about...it was you," The ex-convict's face twisted in anger, "

You

were the one that forced her to soil their bed!"

"Oh, please...it shouldn't be a shock that it happened. Women step out of their marriage all the time when their husband is less than pleasing," Osomatsu was cut off by a loud gunshot, feeling an intense heat graze by his left cheek before taking a few steps back and aiming at Ichimatsu.

"I was wondering why you hadn't climbed the ranks and now I have my answer," Ichimatsu bore down on the bailiff, his wide steps quickly shrinking the distance between the two men, "After all, a

bailiff

can get away with most crimes that a sheriff can't."

Osomatsu loosened his arm before firing his revolver, the shot piercing through Ichimatsu's coat sleeve.

"What

other

crimes have been done under your 'careful watch', Osomatsu?! How many other women have you taken while their

husbands were away

?!" Ichimatsu ducked underneath the range of the dark revolver in Osomatsu's hand, gripping his wrist tightly and twisting it behind his back, forcing the bailiff to drop the weapon, "You

knew

that I was interested in (y/n) and tried to get rid of me before we did anything further...Karamatsu was gone for a trip, but she seemed mighty pleased to see me instead of

someone else

."

Ichimatsu twisted the wrist harder, forcing the barrel of his revolver into the small of Osomatsu's back, "So, tell me...Why did she expect the bailiff to pay a visit that night while she wore her nightclothes?"

"Karamatsu asked me to check in on her," Osomatsu grunted in pain as his eyes settled on the revolver near his feet, "

You're

the one that soiled her, not me."

"Then why did she say that it was still happening."

Osomatsu gritted his teeth, releasing his hold on the waking Ichiro before diving down for his revolver. Ichimatsu was quick to react, letting go of the bailiff's wrist and grabbing the falling child with the same hand before lowering his revolver towards Osomatsu, both men aiming at each other at the same time.

"I'll add 'kidnapping' to your name and ensure that you stay out of town for good," Osomatsu snarled, the confidence slowly leaving his face.

"You're a disgusting man, bailiff, running this town like your personal whorehouse while you use the sheriff to hide your own crimes...you just happened to choose the wrong man to fuck with," Ichimatsu squeezed the trigger, his revolver cracking out another shot in the silent morning. Osomatsu fell back to the ground, his arms limp as his lifeless eyes stared up at the reddish clouds slowly passing overhead.

Ichiro fully woke up startled from the gunshot, crying a little before Ichimatsu calmed him down while he worked. The dark gunmetal of the bailiff's revolver had caught his attention when he saw it, giving a soft huff as he slid it back into its empty holster on Ichimatsu's left hip.

"Stealing a man's gun and stealing someone's love..." Ichimatsu spat out next to the corpse, grabbing a fistful of shirt and dragging it far out into the desert for the wildlife to eat.

"Papa," Ichiro placed a palm on Ichimatsu's cheek, happily laughing when the man looked down at him with a soft smile, "Papa!"

"Come on, Ichiro...let's pay mom a visit."

Steampunk!Ichimatsu x Reader

Requested by shimmering_clouds.

His hands remained steady as the blowtorch cut through the metal sheet, carving its way along a chalk line that he had drawn earlier, the sparks reflected from the single goggle covering his left eye. Pulling the torch away as the excess sheet fell to the ground, he cut the gas powering the tool and set the torch down before a loud bang echoed through the warehouse. Pulling the corner of his lips back in a sneer, the man lifted the goggle from his face as he opened his right eye while turning to face where the loud noise came from.

"Ichimatsu~!" A male voice called out with a soft whine in his tone, another bang echoing out before the warehouse door behind the man opened, "I need your service again!"

"You still owe me 54,328 jewelles for the last job," The first man turned back around to focus on his work, ignoring the newcomer dragging in something large behind him. Holding the carefully carved piece of metal, he unfastened the vice jaws that were locking it in place before carrying it over to his main workbench where other pieces similar in shape were carefully laid out.

"I thought I paid most of that off already," The newcomer dragged the large object into a clearing on the warehouse floor, leaning against it as he removed the goggles from his face, revealing a pair of dark hues that regarded the working man quietly.

"If you're implying that the paltry amount you brought in three months ago, it paid for the repair service that you inquired about," He sighed as he gently placed the cut piece down, barely turning to glare at the man pulling out a cigarette while leaning against the contraption that he had dragged in, "but not for the balance that you had before that."

"Ah, come on, little Ichimatsu!" The now-lit cigarette dangled between the man's lips as he adjusted the tight red jacket wrapped around his chest, unzipping the article as he rolled his eyes, "That bounty payout was just over 40,000!"

"And the debt you had from your massive list of repairs at that time was nearing 100,000 jewelles," Ichimatsu focused back on the workbench in front of him, moving aside some the paperwork from other receipts to clear some room for the small dremel tool he reached for while aligning the smaller shapes in a line.

The only noise within the warehouse was his tools as he began to craft the plates into a single piece, the years of experience keeping the tips of his fingers well out of the way as he leaned over the workbench.

"Is that for (y/n)?"

The sudden closeness of Osomatsu's voice didn't startle the inventor, keeping his rapt focus on the mechanical flower bud that was starting to form as he tightened the tiny screws into the holes that he drilled into the pieces, the entire piece beginning to form as he cautiously hammered the petals into a more realistic look before completely tightening them into place.

"Yes."

"Aww," The other man sounded disappointed, "You didn't like my ideas?"

"Your 'ideas' were meant for a trash bin," Ichimatsu blew off some of the smaller metal shavings, sliding the singular goggle over his left eye as the multiple lenses within the contraption began to offer a close-up view of the gift he was building.

"No, they weren't! I know plenty of women who would love to have a usable metal sculpture of a dick!" Osomatsu scoffed before laying a hand on Ichimatsu's shoulder, the inventor lifting up his hands from the work instantly before he was shaken from side to side, "And what about a

machine that could make all of her fantasies come true, or just going for it? Those were good, too!"

"I refuse to ever let you use my workshop to build anything that you can think of."

"Oh, come on, little Ichi!" Osomatsu turned him around with one hand, placing the other on the open shoulder before shaking him again, "Upper Pier women are all rich and

very

bored! Any of my ideas would've given her some kind of entertainment while you managed to gird your loins--"

"Enough," Ichimatsu shoved the jostler off before sitting down on the stool in front of the workbench, sighing as he shook his head to stop the inner rattling, "I want to give her something special, not just a sex toy."

The warehouse became quiet again as he continued working on the delicate pieces, the scent of cigarette smoke filling the air once more.

"You really think she's not using you?"

Ichimatsu paused in his movements, his gaze lowering from the half-finished project as he pulled the tiny screwdriver away from the metal.

If he allowed himself to be honest, then that was the major worry for him. A Middle Pier like himself was never seen as anything more than someone to barter services with for those in a higher social standing in the city -- and the fact that (y/n) was an Upper Pier by birth never went unnoticed by him.

"Even if she was, there wouldn't be anything that I could do about it," Ichimatsu stated as his gaze hardened against his own words, not wanting to believe them, "Upper Piers rule the city and just allow the rest of us to live here."

Osomatsu let out a heavy breath -- not quite a sigh, but not a groan either -- as the smoke from the cigarette drifted upwards, his footsteps telling

Ichimatsu that he was going back to his machine.

"She's gonna like whatever you give her, little Ichi," He spoke after a long moment of relative silence, "I don't think (y/n) is like the other Upper Pier women, but...I've got a long list of things that need to be stolen if you're wanting a distraction."

"A 'distraction'?" Ichimatsu barely looked at the criminal behind him, "I doubt I'll need that kind of excitement again."

"What, you think that your little flower will bring a smile to her face?" Osomatsu raised an eyebrow before a coy sneer pulled at his lips, "Oh...I know what you're thinking."

Before Ichimatsu could ask him what he meant, the criminal grabbed at his shoulders again and spun the inventor around in his seat.

"Oh, Ichimatsu! This is so lovely!" Osomatsu's voice raised in pitch, imitating a woman's tone, "Let me show you my appreciation!"

The red-jacketed man puckered his lips as he made loud smooching noises, leaning in as Ichimatsu reeled back in disgust. He kicked at Osomatsu, the heel of his boot colliding with the upper thigh before slipping off the leather straps wrapped around the same part of the leg.

"Get off!" Ichimatsu shouted before falling off of the stool, reaching back and grabbing a small device that looked like a remote. Osomatsu grinned and grabbed onto the firm leather wraparound the inventor wore and held him up from completely falling to the ground, trying to continue the 'show of appreciation' as the man underneath pushed his head away, the palm of the fingerless glove finding purchase on skin and keeping the offender's face at arm's length.

"How you know that I lohve you if you don't kissh me?" The high-pitched voice continued, muffling some words as Ichimatsu's fingers clamped down on Osomatsu's cheeks.

"I don't love

you

, asshole!" The inventor grunted as Osomatsu kept up the charade, gritting his teeth as his other hand fumbled with the remote and trying to press a specific button.

"Oh, that'ssh harssh."

"I'm clearly interrupting something," A soft voice called out, drawing both men's attention towards the open door to the warehouse.

A young woman walked towards the contraption that Osomatsu had brought in, gently laying a hand on the back of the green seat back as she looked over at the two men fighting. Her colored hues flicked between the two before she covered her lips with her other hand, stifling a sudden bout of laughter.

The neck of her colored jacket was buttoned up completely, riding up her neck and allowing a pair of small goggles to rest comfortably around it while her hair was left down from any usual style she preferred to wear, resting on her body as her shoulders heaved from the laughter. Her jacket was pinned tight until her waist where it opened up and revealed a large frilled skirt that was dyed in both black and her favorite color, the ruffles laying in random directions while a large wicker basket rested in the crook of her left arm. The skirt trailed down to her knees before revealing the tight leggings that dipped into black boots that seemed completely out of place in her attire, the rear panel of the skirt trailing lower until it brushed against her ankles.

"(Y/n)!" Ichimatsu shouted in surprise as he found the button he was desperately searching for, pressing it harshly before a loud whir echoed through the warehouse, a box-like contraption hovering on its own in the corner before rushing over to where the two men were. Osomatsu let out a cry as the thing slammed into him, shoving him off and away from Ichimatsu, rolling to a stop and holding up a hand against his shoulder while a pout pulled down his bottom lip.

"Little Ichi, I thought we had something..."

"Something's wrong with you," Ichimatsu growled as he got to his feet, tossing the remote onto the workbench before realizing that his half-finished project was still in plain view. Acting nonchalant about what was displayed, he gathered the pieces and put them away into one of his empty project boxes to complete later before storing the box on one of the shelves above the workbench, "I wasn't expecting you to visit today, (y/n). Something wrong?"

"Oh, nothing's wrong," The laughter left her system as she moved to help Osomatsu off of the ground, sidestepping the large hovering box that served as Ichimatsu's mobile platform, "I just wanted to stop by and make sure that you were eating, so I brought food."

"Is there some for me?" Osomatsu held onto her hand after standing up, moving closer and grabbing the basket from her arm before releasing his grip.

"No," Ichimatsu sent a scalding glare that the criminal didn't pay attention to. (Y/n) let out a small laugh before taking the basket from Osomatsu's hands, walking over to the cleared off workbench and setting it down.

"There's enough for the three of us," She barely lifted up the towel on the basket when Osomatsu grabbed a large hunk of bread, a few slices of cheese, and a white packaged tub, "Go ahead and take what you want, Ichimatsu."

His fingers trembled before leaning over to see that what Osomatsu had grabbed was half of what (y/n) brought, her planning clearly showing that she didn't expect him to have company. Moving from the workbench to the small kitchen hidden by the most cluttered area of the warehouse, he grabbed two sets of small bowls and spoons before walking back over to the basket, opening up the remaining package to see (y/n)'s homemade soup. Carefully pouring out an equal amount in both bowls, he handed one to her before taking the second bowl for himself.

"This is delicious, (y/n)!" Osomatsu managed around a bite of bread and cheese, "You should've started a deli instead of that apothecary."

"I couldn't do that..." Her voice faltered a little before she took a sip of the soup, following it immediately with some cheese, "I love my work too much, and it gets me away from my family for the day."

"Are they bothering you...?" Ichimatsu cautiously asked, worry creasing his brow a little.

"Not more than normal," (Y/n) laughed after the response, "Just the usual 'Upper Piers shouldn't have Middle Pier hobbies'."

"Do they get you on that often?" Osomatsu asked through another bite of bread.

"They're just worried that someone's going to get the bright idea to kidnap me and ask for a ransom," She shrugged before having some more of the soup, her spoon dipping back down into the food, "I don't really tell them where I go when I'm not at my shop, so don't rat me out, Mr. Criminal."

"Don't look at me," He laughed, "I get into enough trouble for myself. I don't need to be hunted down by Upper Piers on top of the bounty hunters and police."

"That's your own damn fault," Ichimatsu interjected after swallowing a small bite, "Stop killing people and then maybe you'll be left alone."

"I

don't

kill people," Osomatsu's voice dropped into a dangerous tone, his dark hues suddenly fixated on the inventor, "You know that story's bullshit just as much as I do. Stealing, sure...but never taking lives."

"Then they still haven't caught the actual perpetrator?" (Y/n) quietly asked after the long silence, setting the remaining food down carefully.

"'Fraid not."

"How...long have you been on the run?"

"Long enough," He grunted as he stood up, grabbing the last bit of soup from (y/n)'s bowl and finishing it in one swallow before tossing the bowl back where she had originally placed it, "It's been fun, but I need to hustle. Ichimatsu, have my craft ready by tomorrow morning."

"You need to pay first," Ichimatsu's glare partially returned as (y/n) put the empty container into her basket.

"I'll have the money tomorrow."

With a lazy wave, Osomatsu walked out of the warehouse, leaving the two alone in the silence. Ichimatsu broke it first by putting the bowls away, casting his gaze back to (y/n) as she began to pack up the impromptu lunch, "He's not going to tell."

"I'm not really worried about that," Her answer was soft as he moved to the kitchen area, coming back quickly and helping her stand up, "I wasn't aware that you'd be having company around this time or I would've brought more."

"...how about I make it up to you?" He cast a nervous glance at the unfinished project box, the mechanical flower resting inside, "A date."

"That sounds wonderful," (Y/n) squeezed his hand before letting it go, placing both of her hands on the basket's handles, "Do you have an idea where, or should I wait for a letter?"

"Let's meet in two days just after six o'clock, by the cafeteria we met at."

"The 'Harmonic Satisfaction'? But that's the most expensive cafe in the Midd--"

"Cost doesn't matter to me, (y/n)," He gently cut her off, reaching out and laying both hands on her shoulders, "Just meet me there, okay?"

"S-sure, I'll be there."

Ichimatsu scowled at the people walking by, shifting in the chair to a lower position as the high-collared long jacket began to ride up and hide the back of his neck. He hated being outside around people that he didn't trust, and he hated being out in public more...but he knew that (y/n) was worth the extreme social discomfort.

He

had

to put up with his personal anxieties because he knew she would always hold the trump card in that regard.

(Y/n) was an Upper Pier, someone that this cursed city considered to be of 'noble blood'. She didn't ask for it and never partook of the amenities willingly, forsaking the parties of the higher social rank and choosing to 'walk among mortals' by dabbling as an apothecary. (Y/n) had a knack for it.

That was how Ichimatsu had met her several years ago, when he accidentally stumbled into her new shop after she purchased the old supply store and bumbled about like a mindless oaf as he tried to figure out a way to politely leave the shop without buying anything. (Y/n) gave him an easy out by asking if he needed directions to their new location, and Ichimatsu took it instantly.

He visited a few times after that when he needed her apothecarian services and had accidentally walked in on her father berating her for the 'lower job' she enjoyed having, instantly realizing that she had been hiding her Upper Pier mark on the left side of her neck and feeling both angry at her for being deceitful and hate towards her father for calling his own rank 'scummy'.

Ichimatsu's gaze shifted from the people walking around to the empty cup of coffee sitting in front of him, remembering the shame he felt after leaving the store without saying anything to (y/n) or her father. He was a coward and he always knew that he wouldn't stand up for anyone that had lied to him, but the understanding look on (y/n)'s face as he left drove him insane the following weeks. He was familiar with it...

"You look deep in thought," A kind voice called out as the chair across from him was pulled away from the table, drawing Ichimatsu's attention from his memories as (y/n) sat across from him.

"You're late."

"Not late," She countered with a smile, "One minute early. It's still 5:59."

"...sorry," He sat back up in the chair, his eye catching the leather neck corset stained in her favorite color as she removed the jacket she always wore, "You...didn't have a hard time closing up, did you?"

"Oh, not at all. Today isn't the busiest day of the week for me, so I just sent Mrs. Maganaghen home with her usual cut of the rejects," (Y/n) cleared her throat a little as one of the waiters approached the table, ordering her usual cafe fare before asking for a refill on Ichimatsu's drink.

Ichimatsu lowered his left hand to the hidden package that rested on his upper thigh, his fingertips tracing along the edge before he looked at (y/n)'s unsuspecting smile, "It's your birthday coming up, right?"

"Tomorrow," She nodded gently before the smile dipped as her eyes lowered, "I won't be able to open my store since my family has...uh...made it known that I'm to spend the day with them, which means they have some kind of celebration planned."

"Then it's a good thing I have your present here."

The look of surprise was delightful for him to watch as it shifted into a curious glance, taking in a small breath before producing the small package. The brown wrapping paper gave no clue as to what lay inside the package, and (y/n) carefully took it when Ichimatsu held it out for her.

Her fingers undid the knotted twine before pulling the brown paper off to reveal a box, just a little larger than the hand it was resting in. The lid lifted easily to reveal the burnished copper artwork to the sun, the browns and reds of the metal catching (y/n)'s eyes immediately. Her lips parted a little as she gently lifted the crafted flower out of the box, her hues admiring the

hammered curls of the flower petal tips as she ran a finger across the corded steel stem that swirled into its own stand.

"Ichimatsu..." (Y/n) breathlessly whispered his name, drawing a blush to his cheeks as she looked from the gift to his own gaze, "This is beautiful..."

"...I thought you would like it," He shifted a little in his seat, nervously playing with his necktie.

"Oh, it's more than a 'like'. I love it," She looked back at the metallic sculpted rose as she carefully set it on the table, "This didn't take you terribly long, did it?"

"Just long enough," Ichimatsu swallowed to wet his throat, his right hand reaching out and gently touching hers, "(Y/n)...would...would you mind if I asked you a question?"

She quickly looked at his hand before looking up his arm to hold his suddenly intense gaze, "What is it...?"

"Would you...mind if we took our friendship--" Ichimatsu winced internally.

He sounded desperate

, "I mean -- I would like to deepen my relationship with you, if that is something you're interested in, as well."

(Y/n) stared at him for what felt like forever, his hand beginning to nervously tremble on hers.

Did he ask too soon? Was she seeing someone else already? What if he overstepped his boundaries?

"Well..." The tone in her voice dropped a little, causing Ichimatsu to grit his teeth in frustration, knowing that a rejection was on the way, "Last I checked, that wasn't a question."

He lowered his eyes before she squeezed his hand.

"But my answer would be the same."

Ichimatsu instantly looked back up at (y/n), seeing the same kind smile resting on her lips without judgement.

"You mean...?"

"It's a yes."

Nekomata!Ichimatsu and Reader

Inspired by RawrrrrRawrrrr's prompt.

My heart ached as the tears rolled down my cheeks, flushing past my hands as I tried to stifle the screams.

I had thought that

he

would've been the one for me, but

he

left me with a nearly empty apartment after the sudden announcement that his engagement was approved...the engagement that he had been hiding from me for three years; the very same engagement that he had promised to

me

was handed to another woman that seemingly earned much more than I did.

The positive memories flooded my mind with each shuddering breath, grief twisting them into ugly horrors that only taunted me with failure.

A soft jingle of a tiny bell caught my ear, drawing my focus from the inner turmoil to the small visitor in the room.

"Pitch, sorry..." I hiccuped as the rather large long-coated black cat padded closer to me, his light purple eyes piercing through the void. When I gathered him in my arms, I pressed my face into his back and took a shuddering breath, "It's just me again..."

The large Maine Coon relaxed in my hold, his purr sending vibrations through my body.

"At least you haven't left me yet..." I lay a chaste kiss on top of his head, feeling his front paws barely curl against my skin, "...you won't, right?"

A half-hearted 'mrrf' was all I got in return.

"I'm the only one that knows you prefer dried sardines over the other fish, so you better keep visiting me if you want to keep getting them," The joke was lost on the cat, his ears slowly flattening, "...no, I know you have other families that you see."

Setting Pitch down, I moved slowly towards the kitchen and opened the cabinet closest to the fridge, seeing the dwindling supply of dried sardines.

"At least he didn't take that," Shaking the bag to grab the cat's attention, I held two sardines out as Pitch padded closer. My eyes hooded as he snagged the fish from my fingers, the tag on his collar catching the pale moonlight through the open window that he chose to use.

The address on the pet tag was not mine.

"It's only been...three days and I'm already talking to you like a crazy person," My eyes shut against the threat of tears after I checked the time. I had missed two working shifts, which meant that I was probably fired from the part-time job.

I gave Pitch a few more dried sardines before putting the near-empty bag back into the cabinet, shuffling over towards the window and opening it up wider so Pitch could leave without squeezing through the narrow gap again, "...would you mind staying until I fall asleep? I haven't really...slept since he left."

A flick of the ear was all I received, choosing to take that as a positive indicator.

Pitch accompanied me to the bathroom door, waiting patiently as I washed myself off and dressed in more comfortable clothing, and followed me to my bedroom with his tail high. I remember running my hand through his soft, lengthy fur before my mind fell to darkness.

Pitch's ears twitched when the human let out her telltale sign of deep sleep, blinking slowly at her face before standing up and stretching. He moved through the open window before jumping towards the nearby roof of the neighboring house, nearly thirty feet away.

His black fur ignited in the night with a purple flash, growing larger before vanishing entirely when his sandaled foot touched the roof shingles.

The black fur was replaced by a purple yukata, loosely wrapped around the newly revealed human form. His human hands cinched the cloth tighter around his waist, the feline ears still affixed on his head while two slim feline tails had split from the single tail.

The purple feline eyes had darkened significantly to a color so deep they were nearly black, their focus fixated on the people walking along the streets a block away. His hooded gaze narrowed slightly before taking a step towards his focus point, jumping again into the air with absolute silence.

His human had been hurt again...and the nekomata was feeling

hungry

.

The femur crunched loudly between his fangs, the marrow a sweet delicacy that he savored despite the alcohol-tainted blood that had been pumping through his prey's body.

Pitch had ensured that it was the correct human, his dark eyes glancing down again at the discarded identification for a brief moment before snapping the hip ball joint free from the pelvis, rolling the head of it around his mouth like a large jawbreaker.

His human had been saturated with the scent thick of grief, all sourced from the previous owner of the bones he was enjoying. No more source, no more

grief.

The nekomata had taken care of his human for the past twenty-something years, the years spent near her side were nothing more than a drop in the bucket compared to the lives he lived. Many humans had tried using his powers for their gain, but she had done nothing except ask for favors that bordered on the inane in his eyes.

Staying with her until she fell asleep; watching her baked goods cool so no pests dined on the sweet feast; listening to her poorly-written script while she edited it throughout the reading.

Pitch swallowed the boney paste the fragment had been chewed into, his ears flicking back behind him in partial uncertainty.

His human

had

to know what Pitch really was...who the nekomata truly was underneath the cat guise.

"That must be the first in a few months. Are you sure you're not starving?" A flurry of feathers briefly covered the nekomata's vision, landing in front of him in a pile before spreading out to reveal the winged newcomer.

"Do I look famished to you?" Pitch clicked his tongue harshly against his cheek, looking away from the man with wings, "Last I checked, you weren't concerned with my health."

"I'm not, but a human being pulled into an alley whilst not in a drunken stupor has my curiosity," The two wings furled behind the man's back, the dark hues of his eyes taking in the bloodied appearance of the nekomata after a fresh kill.

The nekomata's left ear twitched hard as his eyes narrowed in warning, both tails lashing out viciously behind him, "Who I eat is none of your business."

"You're right. I'm just being an overbearing brother, as someone called me recently," The daitengu let his hands drop down to his sides from their crossed position, a knowing expression settling on his face, "I don't know you to stay around a human for longer than a few years, so the fact that your scent is saturated with grief is worrisome to me."

"That's none of your business," The words were spat out as the nekomata stood up from his crouching position, his claws out and tense for a fight, "You and the others won't find her."

"Osomatsu is the wild card. The others have no interest, myself included," The daitengu merely shrugged, "If you continue to see this grief-stricken human, your presence would only bring more sorrow. You left your benevolent self behind when you chose to become a nekomata, Ichimatsu."

"I didn't forget that, Karamatsu," Ichimatsu, formerly Pitch, hissed softly as he relaxed his fingers. His tails slowed from their thrashing and his posture softened into a stand, "...I'd go back to being a regular house cat for her..."

Karamatsu, the daitengu, hummed quietly before speaking, "Then shift into a form that could stay by her side, if she is so dear to you that you'd murder those inflicting her."

Ichimatsu remained silent as Karamatsu took to the dark skies, disappearing in a gust of feathers.

I left the window open again, curling up against the bare wall within the thick blanket to ward off the chilly autumn air, taking a deep breath in and opening the new book in my hands.

It had been a few weeks since I had last seen Pitch, the warm summer nights melting into a timid fall before the crisp bite of winter rode on the wind. The sardines that I had bought with the last bit of my final paycheck were ready to be opened, and my search for another job had been fruitless. My only hope was the holiday season coming up.

A muted 'mrrf' caught my attention, drawing my focus to the large black fluffy cat sitting on my windowsill.

"Pitch, you're here!"

His purple eyes briefly looked away from me, his feline face somehow looking more resigned than anything else. The cat jumped down from the windowsill, landing on his hindlegs perfectly and standing up.

The excited smile dropped from my face, watching his movement with a mix of curiosity and worry, "...Pitch?"

"Humans gave me that name decades ago," The voice coming from the cat's mouth sent my mind spinning, "My true name is Ichimatsu."

"Wha--"

"I owe you several favors, human," 'Ichimatsu' spoke as his tiny padded feet strode towards me, the large tail splitting in two while a purple flame ignited on each tip, "I will do everything in my power to give you what you wish."

"...nekomata..." The term fell from my mouth in shock, my hand racing up to my lips as if I was trying to shove the word back in, "You're...not a house cat?"

"...no," My name was soft on his tongue, his eyes briefly glancing away as if ashamed from hiding it from me, "It has been several decades since I chose this path."

I took in a slow breath, several clues that I had seen throughout the years suddenly clicking into place.

"Seeing as how you haven't killed me yet, may I assume that you're not after me for a meal?"

"I couldn't bring myself to eat you."

'Couldn't' meaning that he had tried to at some point.

"What will happen to me after all of the favors have been paid for?" I finally closed the book laying open on my lap, thumbing the pages for a moment before looking back at the nekomata.

"I will leave after paying off my debts to you."

I caught the change of expression on his face, shifting from his default look to something akin to uncertainty.

"I don't want you to leave, Ichimatsu."

"...then I won't."

The nekomata and I stared at each other for a moment longer, only broken by the shudder that tore through my body as the room's temperature continued to plummet.

"Let's get you warm," Ichimatsu's body swelled as his cat paws pulled the window shut, landing on all fours and padding over to where I sat against the wall. He wedged himself between the wall and my back, his new size similar to that of a jaguar -- still retaining his long black fur and split tail, "I'll give that one to you for free."

The rumbling purr along my back was soothing to feel, allowing me to close my eyes and lean fully against Ichimatsu. The combination of purring warmth and the comforting presence of the once house cat drew my mind towards sleep, "Why made you change your mind on eating me...?"

I never heard the answer before falling asleep.

Ichimatsu withheld his response until she let out the deep sigh that he was so familiar with, curling up around her as she mimicked his movement against his side. His pink tongue gently swiped across her cheek.

"...because I love you."

Naga!Ichi and Injured!Reader

Inspired by peterpanpurple's prompt.

(This one-shot takes place between 'Subject to Study' and 'Subject to Study Extended'. Reader has not mated with any naga at this point.)

It had been a week since the Mi-26 had lifted off from the island that the nagas claimed as their home, my home within Jyushi's territory nearing the finishing point while I was almost halfway through creating a safe space for me in the other territories. I had found where Erika had created a place for her to survive, rudimentary compared to the society that I had just fled from but sophisticated for what the island offered. When I was questioned by Choro if I wanted to use it, I could only shake my head.

I didn't want to live in the shadow of my betrayer.

Choro tore everything down after I gathered the remaining supplies, not looking back for a second.

My eyes wandered the rocky cliffside as I walked near the ridge, heading east-southeast along the edge of Ichi's territory in boredom. The large storm that I had bunkered with Kara had damaged some of the loose terrain, ever mindful of staying away from ridges that looked too thin to stand on.

I had been instructed by Kara to stay away from the cliffs for a few days, to allow the soil to dry up once more and hold the boulders and rocks firm in their treacherous positions, and I had fully complied. I had fallen into a sinkhole once when I strayed from the nagas warning, and I never wanted to experience that again.

With today being the fourth day since the storm, there wasn't a speck of wet soil or ground to be seen. Ichi hadn't argued against my proposed plan for the day, his reasoning that there was nothing else in his territory that could harm me besides the cliffside.

A splash of green against the constant brown and gray caught my eye, drawing my attention downwards as I moved a little closer to the edge, seeing a blanket of green spotted with light purple cover the entire cliffside where I had been walking. The growth of the plant told me that the nagas hadn't even tried to gather it, and my curiosity was spurred on as I knelt a few inches away from the ledge and leaned over to get a better look at it.

If the nagas hadn't tried, then I knew they'd be against me trying...if I told them.

Moving back to where I could get a better view of the growth, I estimated that the patch was only six or seven feet down. I'd definitely need some sturdy vines to lower myself down and that meant a trip to Choro's territory.

Leaning back into a sitting position, I looked towards my left as the cliffs bloomed into a lush jungle near the mountain range. It was almost an hour's trek from where I was, as the plant growth was near the border of Choro's and Ichi's territories. Though, gathering what I needed would be a little more difficult with the concerning cut still healing on the back of my hand.

It was nearly closed, but I couldn't risk re-opening the scab. The artery was still exposed enough underneath the gauze that any brush with a rough surface could puncture the thin wall of skin, and the island didn't have anything to help with blood loss.

I'd have to navigate the climb with my uninjured hand doing most of the work, and that meant the vines I'd need would have to be thick, alive, and long.

Cutting free a fifth vine from the lowest branch, I wound it up and laid it on the others nearby. The total length I had gathered should be more than enough for the descent to the patch of untouched green on the cliffside, sheathing the knife I used and looping the coils over my right arm.

"And what, may I ask, are you planning with those?"

A voice drew my attention further up in the tree, a pair of dark green hues peering out from the lush camouflage.

"Choro, just gathering these up as rope," I offered a smile as I continued my task, "Never know when you're going to need them."

The subtle hiss sounded incredulous, the green mamba naga lowering himself from the tree and coiling in my path. His green eyes hooded in a skeptical manner, "Somehow I don't believe you."

"I'm not lying. The vines will be used as rope," With a slight heft of my shoulder, the coiled vines settled along my arm, "Was just taking inventory of my home in Ichi's territory and thought it would be best to have some rope there just in case."

I tried walking around the naga, flinching when he shifted in my new direction.

"There's nothing to use the rope on, (y/n), unless you're going to climb the mountain range," His eyes narrowed further, each exhale a soft hiss, "Which you have protested vocally on the last trek to the overlook."

With an exacerbated sigh, I rolled my eyes, "Choro, please. I can't be too prepared."

Silence was his answer, merely watching as I dodged around his intrusion while making my way back towards Ichi's territory.

I hated lying to the nagas, but I knew that every word of warning they spoke to me had a purpose behind it. They weren't trying to keep me smothered or hidden away from exploring their island...but the new finding possibly remained out of their reach because they didn't have a way to get to it without falling into the ocean.

I wanted to show them that I could take care of myself, that I didn't need to be constantly looked after.

The sun had begun to lower in the sky when I made it back to the patch of green along the cliff, my hands deftly tying the vine ends into knots and pulling as hard as I could to ensure that the knot wouldn't slip under my weight. I made use of a jutting rock that pointed like a compass' arrow out

to sea, looping the vines a few times around its base to secure a solid anchor point before tossing the remaining length over the cliff's edge.

The amount I had cut dipped well below the green patch I wanted to investigate.

With a proud smile, I double-checked my knife's location and slowly climbed down the sheer rock wall with both hands on the vines, using it to slowly repel down.

Five feet. Two.

Both of my boots found solid purchase on the partially flat rockface where the greenery grew, my hands slowly releasing their grip on the vines before crouching close to the ground and beginning to document what exactly this new discovery was.

Taking a few leaves and sniffing them, crushing them between my fingers, lifting the pulp to my lips. Every step I took was from being taught by both Erika and the nagas on how to identify helpful herbs, smelling a light mixture of mint and pepper while tasting a more earthy tone that compounded with the mint.

It didn't taste overly sweet or extremely foul, my sinuses didn't immediately reject what they detected, and I felt fine after a few moments of letting the taste linger in my mouth.

Cutting a few grafts to see if I could plant this in the different biomes on the island, I cautiously moved back towards the vine rope after ensuring everything I brought down was back in its place on my body. I had tucked the plant grafts with the knife I used to cut them, mindful to keep the roots away from the exposed blade.

With every pull, I lifted myself up from the foliage patch, carefully picking my way back up the cliffside.

Six feet from the lip. Three.

My uninjured hand grasped the rocky edge, using some core strength to lift myself up while clinging to the vine for support. When my head cleared the top, a flash of fur and feathers smothered my vision.

A scream from a wild hare, a screech from an aerial predator. A shocked cry from my throat as I lost all purchase in the surprise attack I had interrupted.

The drop down to the growth was eight feet down, the fall to the ocean another thirty.

I tried to grab the vine, the live flesh offering little in tension as my palm grew hot and sore from ropeburn. Something snagged my right arm before I could slow down, the limb becoming wedged and jerked upwards as my body continued to fall with gravity before suddenly stopping from the unfortunate brake.

The pain radiating out from my right shoulder was indescribable, screaming out in pain that became lost amongst the waves below me. The vine rope swayed in the wind within arm's reach, but it remained forgotten in the moment as I stared at the dislocated limb in shock.

My fingers grew numb and any attempt to move my hand or forearm was met with excruciating pain.

Taking advantage of my adrenaline, I grabbed onto the vine rope with my only good hand and slowly worked my way into a position where I was no longer dangling over the ocean by my dislocated shoulder. Fighting against my urge to cry and wail at my own misfortune, I clenched my teeth and began the 'short' ascent back up without using the fully injured arm.

My feet found solid purchase in the previous footholds, taking each step -- every inch -- slowly as I breathed through my nose in deep gulps.

In only ten seconds, I went from fully capable to handicapped in the worst possible setting.

Anger filled my mind where fear had ebbed, rage pointed at myself as I was the only one at fault for this whole thing happening. The nagas had warned

me, and I ignored it because I thought I would be okay.

It was the sinkhole all over again, except this time I gained a debilitating injury.

The sun sank lower to the horizon before I clambered over the edge, careful to not let my dislocated arm fall to the ground or brush against anything that could catch it. My left hand throbbed in pain from the unassisted climb, my legs sore from remaining tense throughout the entire ascent. I could only lay on my back for the moment, resting the crook of my uninjured arm over my eyes as I whimpered as quietly as I could.

I was so angry at myself for acting like a petulant child that thought themselves more important than anything else in the immediate world, angry at the ignorance I had from such a 'simple' descent and not taking note of dangerous crags that could cause such wounds, angry that I had even done such a thing in the first place.

The nagas hadn't tried it because they already knew of the dangers.

The stupid human I was thought they didn't know better.

How many more times did I need to learn this lesson?

This island was their home -- a place that they had lived on for their entire lives and a place that had kept them secret from the civilized world.

I was the intruder.

I

was the one that had drawn them out of hiding and into the trap unknowingly...

I was the one who shouldn't be stepping out of line.

Tears flowed hot down my cheeks as I allowed my emotions to turn physical, the hot anger seeping into warm sorrow and chilled regret, my

inner child wailing at her mistakes while the adult husk tempered her feelings into a quiet mourning.

A small thought surfaced within the cooling wellspring within me, my mind focusing on the remaining task while my tears dried up: the herb still needed to be brought to my home.

Sitting up was easy enough, rolling from my butt to my knees was a little harder with only one arm for balance, and standing up from the kneeling position was more challenging. However, when I was on my feet, I was steady.

Ensuring that the grafts were still in place, I began walking towards my home buried within the rocky walls of the nearby mountain.

I didn't hear him enter, only squawking out in pain when his touch suddenly appeared against my injured arm.

Bewildered at the naga's sudden appearance within my home, I pressed my back against the rear wall of stone and fought to catch my breath as the lavender corn naga observed every movement I made, his dark hues locked onto the dislocated shoulder while his tail continuously coiled underneath him. His agitation was palpable, marked by his tail movement and the consistent flicking of his forked tongue.

"Ichi--"

"Why."

The word was a bark in the silence, his glare morphing into a glower as the naga switched his focus from my arm to my face.

I swallowed harshly, the drying newfound herb of Native Thyme left forgotten on the flat stone used for making herbal remedies. I didn't need to ask for clarification, "I didn't want to bother you...so I tried to gather some on my own."

"And look what you were rewarded with," Each word was pointed with a hissed exhale.

Ichi was

furious

.

"I'm sorry--"

"Apologies won't bring you back from the dead!" Ichi yelled, his voice bouncing off the stone walls as he reared above me, "You were told to stay from the cliff edge!"

"I thought I knew better!" I cried back, fighting to push down the tightness in my throat, "I won't do it again, okay?!"

His tail was a blur of motion as I felt his enormous weight pressing down on top of me, my legs and torso pinned to the floor while his hands grabbed my head and uninjured arm, "You say that you won't be a burden on us, that you'll learn and grow from your mistakes...but all you do is act like a newborn foal! Stumbling and staggering about, getting in everyone's way while playing by your own rules! Our warnings are meant to keep you

safe

, (y/n)!"

Ichi's grip was gentle on my hair and wrist despite the emotional fury cascading over his facial features, "How can we keep you alive when you don't seem to have the same desire...?"

I took in his words as he caught his breath, the lavender corn naga searching my face for something as his scrunched up in worry, dipping his head low to rest against my healthy shoulder.

"...you're our mate. It's our job to keep you safe from any ill that would affect your health...and to see you injured like this only spurs anger because

it means we've

failed

," Ichi gently caressed my opposed cheek as he released his hold on my hair. After a few heavy moments, he lifted his head away from mine before locking his gaze onto my hues, "Your arm...I've suffered this kind of injury before."

Understanding flooded my mind before realization lanced through the mental blanket, biting harshly on my bottom lip as the last few feet of Ichi's tail spiraled around my injured arm, his hand gently tracing over the dislocated shoulder.

"The pain will last a few days, which means you'll be delayed in leaving for Jyushi's territory," The naga spoke quietly, "...but carry this as a reminder to heed our words, okay? Don't make us feel like a failure..."

With a sudden jerk of his tail and harsh press of his hand, the dislocated limb reset back into the socket with a wave of intense pain that drew a scream from my throat. While I cradled the limb against my chest, Ichi carefully coiled around my form and offered much needed support.

True to his word, Ichi tended to my every need while I remained in his territory.

Outcast!Ichimatsu and Reader

The annoying chirp sounded once more in his back pocket as Ichimatsu staggered down the alleyway, his head pounding like a wardrum as the wellspring of fire threatened to explode from his skin. The curse of pyrokinesis was something he wasn't wanting but had to embrace when his five other brothers gladly accepted the weird kinetic powers they had developed, leading to all sextuplets splitting apart as a family and forming their own gangs.

His left hand lifted to his head and tugged at the purple headband clinging close to his dark hair, gripping it tightly as another surge of heat raged through his nerves.

It had been days since he last used his power, growing more terrified to even dip into the wellspring even a little. The ability was growing; Ichimatsu didn't need to fight his brothers to feel it.

The problem was--

Another chirp from his back pocket, drawing his attention only for a moment before he allowed himself a small respite and leaned against a discarded billboard near the end of the alley. He withdrew his phone from underneath the tattered purple flannel shirt tied around his waist, flipping the small device open to see three messages from (y/n).

'Stopped by your place with the cat food you needed. I'll leave it here.'

'I miss the times that we hung out like old times, skipping stones along the river from the broken bridge and feeding the local strays. Don't stay out too long, okay?'

'Text me back if you feel like it. I don't want to overwhelm you.'

Ichimatsu's eyes narrowed in disappointment at himself, closing the phone without responding.

(Y/n) would understand, right?

She had dated his oldest brother, Osomatsu, just before the brothers developed these powers, so she knew of Ichimatsu's struggle.

The crackling of fire grabbed his attention as he stepped away from the billboard, gritting his teeth in frustration as purple flames licked at the dried wood and paper. Ichimatsu splayed his left hand wide towards the flames before clenching it shut in a fist, sweat beading on his forehead as the flames slowly died out.

This was bad

. He needed to get to the old abandoned warehouse to let this power loose in a safe place. The crumbling concrete walls were more than enough to withstand his fire when he initially practiced there, hoping that they would be enough for his flames' new heat.

Another turn from the alleyway spat Ichimatsu out into the outskirts of the city, buildings left to rot and wither under the summer sun while the impoverished roamed the cracked streets. It was under the city's blind eye, the community agreeing to let it decay while they kept their newer construction close to the city center.

It was also where (y/n) chose to live.

Ichimatsu stumbled down to his knees as another wave of smoldering pressure crushed his ribcage, knowing he was

so close

to losing complete control over the wildfire running in his veins. Sweat dripped down his face as his trembling arms pushed him back up, taking his intended path one step at a time.

His destination peeked into view as he used a boarded fence for support, his free hand clutching his jacket and shirt over his heart.

Only a few more meters before the fence ended, then he could stagger into the warehouse and unleash the hellfire within him.

"I said 'stop', Osomatsu!"

Ichimatsu's feet stilled at the cry, the woman's voice soothingly familiar. The man's laugh that followed was also recognizable.

It was definitely Osomatsu.

Ichimatsu had to make sure that the oldest wasn't doing anything stupid while near (y/n)'s home. With a soft grunt of exertion, the purple-clad brother dragged himself back to the corner he had just passed seconds ago, peering around the wooden planks as stealthily as he could.

It was indeed Osomatsu and (y/n), her figure nearly pinned to the length of wire fence nearly spanning the length of the street as Osomatsu leered at her, his hands tucked into the pockets of the unfastened black jacket that he wore over his red hoodie. The black pants seemed to match the jacket's style, the bottom hems tucked deep into the blood red laced boots that Osomatsu always wore. The double helix piercings were new on his left ear, mirroring the pair already on his right.

"Oh, come on, babe," Osomatsu leaned ever closer while partially hooding his eyes, his presence forcing (y/n) to press herself into the chain-link fence, "It's hardly a big ask."

"Yes, it is, asshole!" (Y/n) tried to wiggle out from his overpowering stance before yelping as one of his hands slammed into the fence next to her head, his other instantly closing her in, "Stop! I'm not giving you anything!"

Ichimatsu pulled away from the corner, but didn't stray from where he stood. He recognized the expression on Osomatsu's face.

The oldest wasn't going to take 'no' as an answer at this point. Surely, (y/n) knew that, too, right? She was the one to break off the relationship because he became overbearing, so she must've known the signs--

"No, don't touch me!" Her plea was quickly followed by a shocked cry, Ichimatsu instantly and blindly rounding the corner as the hellfire within him burned furiously.

(Y/n)'s hands had been pinned above her head while Osomatsu had laced his fingers around hers and the chain link, keeping them still while his free hand was engulfed with red fire.

"Don't test me and I won't

accidentally

hurt you," The red-clad brother leaned ever closer, one of his knees lodging between (y/n)'s legs, "I know you miss this."

Osomatsu's fiery hand lowered towards her chest, his fingers reaching for the buttons on her closed shirt.

Ichimatsu's eyes widened in anger, purple flames flaring from his right eye while his fists clenched tightly. Fear ate at his nerves as the rage fueled the power within him. Would he retain enough control to keep (y/n) safe? Would she be better off if Ichimatsu did nothing?

His emotions snapped as the first button came undone, Osomatsu's lips twisting into a cruel sneer while his tongue licked his top lip. The dark hues were completely focused on the hidden prize beneath (y/n) shirt.

"She said

'stop'!

" Ichimatsu yelled out, purple fire exploding from his palms as his open hands reached out to the pair. The fire consumed his body as the flicker leaking from his right eye swelled into an inferno, yet the clothing remained unburned.

The blast of purple fire echoed with a roar as it spread its fury to the broken concrete, the metal links partially melting as the heat brushed against the fence. The summer sun was nothing compared to Ichimatsu's fiery blaze.

"Ichimatsu!" Osomatsu cried out in annoyed surprise as he released his hold on (y/n), the woman falling to the ground while the oldest wreathed himself in his own red fire. Purple collided with red as (y/n) cried out in fear.

The younger brother's eyes widened in shock, taken aback that Osomatsu would completely abandon his ex and frantically urged his own fire to leave (y/n) untouched, his trembling fingers urging the wild ability to not harm her.

He wasn't sure if the fire responded in time.

In moments, both the purple and red fires simmered to a crackle, the dual colors eating away at the destroyed concrete while Ichimatsu struggled to move closer to (y/n).

"That was quite the greeting, little Ichimatsu," Osomatsu merely waved a hand in front of his face as the flames died down, his own right eye surrounded by red fire, "Surely a 'hello' would've been better."

"With the way that you were acting?" Ichimatsu responded, taking advantage of the space between Osomatsu and where the fence was, "Not a chance."

Ichimatsu felt a hand grip on the plaid shirt tied around his waist, a wave of relief crashing over his nerves while he took a shallow breath. He glanced down behind him to see (y/n), unharmed but terrified as her wide eyes were locked onto Osomatsu.

"Please. That was nothing more than me trying to stoke an old flame," The older brother huffed as his hands tucked back into his jacket pockets.

"I'm sure that's why you tried it out here instead of in the city," Ichimatsu growled, feeling the near empty wellspring within him start to fill again, "Back off."

"I know how your power works, Ichimatsu," Osomatsu gave a confident smirk, "That's all you have in you. Lots of firepower, but very little control."

"Are you betting your life on that?" With little urging, purple flames began licking at Ichimatsu's hair and clothing, his narrowed gaze lowering in a threat.

"...well, well..." He took a cautious step back before scoffing, turning around and walking away, "We'll see how long that lasts."

No one spoke until Osomatsu had walked far into the distance, Ichimatsu standing a little taller with a deep breath.

"Ichimatsu," (Y/n)'s voice was trembling as her hand released the shirt, "I'm...I'm so sorry..."

"...there's nothing to be sorry for, (y/n)," He looked down at her with a soft smile, watching her movements carefully to see if she had taken any damage from

his

power. The smile grew a little when nothing on her body was singed, "What about you? Are you okay after...that?"

Her hands brushed off any concrete dust that clung to her pants, adjusting her clothing and rebuttoning her shirt before offering a smile in return, "Perfectly healthy, thanks to you."

"Good..." was all he could mutter before he fell against her frame, his exhaustion tenfold after the sudden release and depletion of the fire within him. The small show afterwards only pushed his limits.

"Ichi--?!"

"I'm fine...just very tired," He muttered against her shoulder as her arms wrapped around his back, "I really am...a glass cannon, aren't I?"

"I'd rather be friends with a glass cannon than the Dragon Red," (Y/n) let a soft laugh escape her lips as she uttered Osomatsu's street name, "I'll take you to my place. It's closer than yours."

Ichimatsu nodded as (y/n) helped him walk to her apartment, the small space a warm comfort. She was careful with him when laying him on the couch, bringing him a large glass of water to cool down his body while tending to his smaller wounds that he didn't realize he had, the cuts not as painful as he thought they would be.

--Mature-- Omega!Ichimatsu x Alpha!Reader

WARNING! This is a mature chapter, and meant for an 18+ audience. If you're younger than that, I respectfully ask you find something else to read.

If you're older than 18, you may continue at your own discretion.

This story contains mentions of sexual scenes (female to male) and loss of gender/sexual identity.

He gritted his teeth in desperation, gripping the blanket surrounding him tightly as his body convulsed. His purple shirt felt constricting to wear as his free hand roughly pulled at the collar, desiring to get out of it but not wanting to feel the fabric brush against the sensitive nubs on his chest.

Ichimatsu glanced towards the digital clock sitting on the bedside table, closing his eyes as another pleasurable shudder ripped through his body, drawing a breathy moan from his throat. He and his mate had been expecting his heat to start today, but she had to leave to get something they had forgotten in their planning.

Five minutes...she'll be back in five more minutes...

It was hard for Ichimatsu to convince himself that those five minutes would pass quickly when his senses could detect her lavender and mint scent everywhere in the bedroom. (Y/n) had lavished him with kisses before she left, promising that she'd be back quickly and lay her scent-soaked blanket next to him. Ichimatsu didn't know if the blanket was helping or hurting his situation.

A whine was pulled from his throat when his Alpha's scent grew stronger, not even feeling the bed move before she was against him, her cool hands

tracing the skin from his neck to his arms. (Y/n)'s touch soothed the raging fire that was burning in his belly for a moment before a different kind of heat settled in its place.

Ichimatsu tried to move his hands down to her, to pull her close against him, to make her mate him, but his shirt was swiftly removed from his chest and tangled up around his wrists. Glancing down in uncertainty, Ichimatsu sucked in a breath as his dark hues met the burning colored eyes of his Alpha, both understanding and desire shimmering in her hues. She knew what he wanted to do, what he needed to have happen, but she was going to play with him before letting him have what he wanted.

A heavy blush flooded Ichimatsu's face as she pulled down his track pants with her free hand, her fingers dancing around the swelling tent in his briefs and only touching his inner thighs. His face screwed tightly into frustration as he felt (y/n) release her grip on his shirt, trailing a finger down one of his arms and lightly rub over his hardening nipple.

"(Y/n)...please--"

The track pants slid off of his legs completely, allowing her to slip in between him and use her hips to push his legs towards his chest, "Please what, Ichimatsu...?"

The teasing tone of her voice was more than enough to send waves of pleasure up his spine, "Please fuck me!"

"Oh? I haven't played with you enough, yet..."

Ichimatsu felt her lean down and lick his other nipple, his nerves on fire from the sparse contact. He couldn't think anymore, unsure if it was caused by his heat or by her absolute control over him.

He loved it all.

"No--" The words passed through his lips in a heated moan, instantly gasping as she gripped more of his pectorals in her hands, fully sucking on the left nipple while squeezing the right one. Stars exploded in his eyes

when he felt her hands trail down to his waist, lifting him off the bed a little as something hard gently prodded at his lower entrance. He cried out in passion as the bulbous appendage slipped into him, spreading him wide to accommodate for the size while (y/n) grunted, her enlarged canines nibbling at his ear before trailing down his neck.

Ichimatsu's voice rose several octaves as he felt (y/n) bite down while thrusting into him, his vision becoming fuzzy when he felt one of her hands wrap around his partially hardened member, pumping it with an opposite timing of her waist. His hands freed themselves from the k knotted shirt and reached around her back, tangling up in (y/n)'s loose hair while she continued to thrust into him. A slight change of angle and another bite drew out lewd moans from Ichimatsu, letting himself be moved around as the heat fully took hold of his mind.

Two breasts pressed into his back as he lay on his left side, Ichimatsu's right leg lifting up before (y/n) entered him from behind again. He hadn't even felt her pull out, shocked by the re-entry and feeling her left fingers dip into his mouth. They played with his tongue, tugged against his cheek as moans and cries escaped in his passion. (Y/n) had found most of his kinks and buttons, using them in different patterns throughout the relationship while they coupled together. But his absolute favorite was--

Once more, the mating couple shifted positions, leaving Ichimatsu straddling (y/n) waist as she held on tightly to his hips. His hooded eyes and heated expression told her everything she needed to know, her body now covered in sweat from the mating.

Ichimatsu supported himself with his hands, propping himself up above (y/n) before lowering himself fully and locking lips with her. They fought over control for the kiss before (y/n) won, her sharp teeth nicking his bottom lip as she greedily devoured him in the kiss. Her waist rolled up and hit a sensitive spot inside him, drawing a mewling cry that signaled he was close to finishing.

(Y/n)'s fingers dug into his skin as she pushed Ichimatsu down harder and harder onto her shaft, her canine teeth finding the same area on his shoulder and biting down once more. He became a whimpering and bleeding mess

under her assault, feeling his entrance constrict before ejaculating in his throes of passion. She kept railing into him until he had been spent completely, letting Ichimatsu rest on top of her as she remained within.

Ichimatsu slowly opened his eyes, his left hand reaching out to where he had last felt someone's body heat, a small frown settling on his lips when his fingers only felt cold bed sheets. The blanket soaked in (y/n)'s scent was laying across him, pulling it close as he slowly sat up in bed to see a small tray of food sitting on the table: two bananas, three pancakes with chocolate chips, and a tall glass of orange juice.

(Y/n) walked into the room, fully clothed and looking refreshed from the coupling earlier. Her hands were holding a similar tray of food for herself.

"Good morning, Ichimatsu," A warm smile crossed her lips, sitting next to him on the bed as he slouched forward.

"(Y/n)..." He waited until she was settled before leaning against her shoulder, pushing the food from his mind despite his stomach protesting, "Are...you okay...?"

"I'm fine, like always," She peeled a banana and ate it before continuing, "You don't need to worry about me, okay?"

"But..." His bottom lip pulled into a pout, his body leaning forward to look into her colored hues. She laughed a little before pushing him back.

"Go ahead and eat. You still need to get cleaned up, so I'll change the bedding while you're in the bathroom," (Y/n) leaned in close and gave Ichimatsu a kiss on the lips, "Your heat lasted a little longer than normal this time...let me know if I can help you with anything."

"How much longer?" The more he talked, the rougher his voice sounded and the itchier his throat became. He remedied that a little by taking a sip of the orange juice, feeling it hit his empty stomach.

"It was three days this time."

Three days?!

His eyes widened before looking over at her, catching the finer details in her face as he kept staring.

(Y/n) was normally a muscular woman that rivaled the lighter range of male powerlifters in raw strength, her figure completely toned from the Alpha testosterone surging through her system and from her career as a bodybuilder. An injury had cut her career short early in their relationship, and she had been regulated to physical therapy for her wounded knee with hopes of returning to the bodybuilding world in a year or so.

To see that (y/n) had lost a bit of weight due to mating with him for three straight days was disheartening to see, Ichimatsu lowering his head while his gaze switched to the floor.

"I...didn't wear

it

out, did I...?" His rough voice softened a little, prompting him to take another drink.

"Eat and get cleaned up. You don't need to concern yourself over what happened," Another comforting kiss from (y/n) perked him up a little, allowing him to finish the breakfast she had made before heading into the bathroom.

Ichimatsu was definitely sore from all of the attention she had given him, on top of the little extra punishment that she knew he loved to be hit with. Finding that the tub had already been drawn out, Ichimatsu was tempted to ask her for help, but found that his body still had enough strength to wash by himself. Gently scrubbing the bruised and abused areas, he felt a blush cover his cheeks as he thought back to what had happened for the last three days. How (y/n) had mated with him nonstop and how she had seemed to know exactly what he wanted before he said it.

A satisfied moan hissed between his lips as Ichimatsu rinsed off the dirty suds, giving himself another cleansing scrub before dumping the bucket over his head again. As he climbed into the warm tub, Ichimatsu's mind wandered to what he had mentioned earlier as his face flushed with embarrassment. He had known that it was a delicate subject for (y/n) to talk about, but he had asked the question without a second thought.

It

. Her strap-on dildo.

The toy that female Betas used in role reversal couplings to please either their male or female mate and something an Alpha wouldn't consider using themselves.

Ichimatsu sank deeper into the tub, the water line rising to rest just underneath his nose as his eyes heavily hooded in thought.

(Y/n) was an uncommon female Alpha.

The second gender caused a rift in her family when she presented at a younger age, her parents and grandparents horrified that a female from their family could even become an Alpha, a role that was strictly seen in that family for the male sex. While some of her extended family was supportive of her second gender, her parents abused their paternal rights and allowed (y/n) to go under the knife before she had turned ten.

Her testes and clitoris were completely removed, which meant that there would be no functionality of her sexual organs. No children from her since her womb no longer functioned after presenting as an Alpha and no erection that she could feel pleasure from or knot with.

He didn't have the courage to ask how she felt sexual satisfaction since (y/n) was essentially turned into a eunuch.

Ichimatsu closed his eyes as he thought back to when he and (y/n) had met, when she was looking for a cat to adopt from the local shelter that he used to volunteer at. Her scent had confused him at first, prompting Ichimatsu to

talk with her and slowly find out who she was as a person. After all, how could a feminine scent like lavender and mint be attached to someone who was obviously an Alpha?

From there, their relationship grew to one of friendship and he introduced her to his brothers, surprised to see them all get along. (Y/n) was gentle with the Omegas of the family, Jyushimatsu and himself, while getting a little rougher with the Alphas, Osomatsu and Karamatsu. The Betas, Choromatsu and Todomatsu, tolerated her presence and they all formed a close friendship with (y/n), calling on her for drinks or the odd gambling sessions, inviting her over for their familial Mahjong nights or barging into her apartment to crash after a fight to heal up or sleep.

Ichimatsu smiled to himself as he climbed out of the tub, pulling the stopper and watching the mineral-filled water drain down the piping. His favorite towel was already laid out, along with a clean pair of clothes and undergarments. Resting on top of the fabrics was a full glass bottle of chocolate milk.

(Y/n) was impossible for him to not love.

"Feeling better?" (Y/n) smiled over at him, closing the small door on the dryer and turning on the machine. She moved from the adjacent laundry room to the common room where Ichimatsu had been lounging on the large couch after the much-needed bath, sitting in the crook of his posture and leaned back against his legs and waist.

"Much..." Ichimatsu lifted a hand to run through her hair, "I got lost in some memories."

"Were they good ones?" She returned the favor, rubbing her short nails against his scalp as she scratched the back of his head.

"Most of them..."

"Wanna talk about the bad ones?"

"Not sure..." His hand faltered in its pattern, drawing her full attention down to him as an uncertain look settled on his face.

"Well, in my experience, it's better to talk about it even if it's a sensitive topic," Her voice softened, "Communication between mates is pretty important."

Ichimatsu hummed before looking up at her, seeing her smile in response to the eye contact, "Have...you thought of getting corrective surgery?"

The smile partially dropped, replaced by a pensive look before she looked away fully. Ichimatsu gave her time, knowing that she liked to think her answers through before responding. He dropped his hand from her head to let her focus on the question.

"Not really, no," (Y/n) eventually looked back at him, "It's more expensive to put something in than to take it out, I think, and there could be complications from the scar tissues that aren't on the surface. I haven't put much thought to it, since what we have seems to be working for us. Is...it still working for you?"

"...of course, it is," Ichimatsu didn't fight the blush spreading across his face, "But I can't help but feel like I'm the only one getting the most out of it while you're--"

"...physically a Beta?" She finished the words he didn't want to say.

He clicked his tongue against his cheek, violently turning his head away from her as frustration twisted his features.

Silence filled the room for a moment, only the sound of the wall clock ticking marked the passing of time.

"Ichimatsu," (Y/n) moved from her spot, kneeling on the floor in front of him and gently putting a hand against his cheek to make him look at her. She continued only when their gazes connected, "I'm happy with this. You're the mate I've chosen to be with for the rest of my life and I am comfortable with my physicality around you. I guess the stereotypical thing

to say would be 'you're not like other Omegas' at this point, but the stance is the same."

"(Y/n)..." Ichimatsu rubbed his cheek against her hand, "I worry that--"

"You're not the only one getting pleasure out of this, Ichimatsu."

His wide dark hues stayed on her own beautiful colors, seeing some of his face reflected in the glass-like surface.

"Even if my breasts were to completely shrink away and I became a genderless mess of a human, I'd still have the same mindset," (Y/n) closed the distance between them, sealing their lips in an intimate kiss that didn't demand anything more than a desire for him to feel her. She pulled away after a long moment and rested her forehead against his, "I'm your Alpha and it's my job to make sure that you're happy and protected, just like you're worried about my happiness as my Omega. If it bothers you that much, then I'll let you know when I need to replace it and you can buy me one that you'd like to try out."

Ichimatsu laughed at the sudden offer, partially turning away as his face flushed.

"You know I have a thing for cats..."

"Just make sure the barbs are rounded," (Y/n) poked the tip of his nose as a coy smile tugged at her lips, leaning in for another non-demanding kiss.

Mafia!Jyushimatsu x Reader

Inspired by ara_jhoo's prompt.

She heard the gunshots outside before the front window of her flower shop shattered, crying out in fear as she ducked down into a far corner of the small back room. Cries of pain and shouts of anger rolled in from the street, triggering more gunshots before she heard footsteps running away from the store, not moving from her spot until she heard someone grunting in pain. The crunch of glass underfoot was heard as someone trespassed into her store before the young woman heard a few things get knocked to the ground, shattering and creating more debris. The woman grabbed one of the long wooden vases near her, wielding it like a baseball bat as she slowly crawled from her hiding spot.

"...dammit, not here...this isn't good..."

The voice identified the stranger as a man, the footsteps coming closer before she heard a wet 'thunk', the sound mixing with the broken glass on the ground. The woman peeked around the corner of the back room to see someone sprawled out on the ground, instantly dropping the wooden vase to go see if they were okay.

"Hey, hang in there...!" She called out as she checked over his body. The dark hair was stuck to his head and face in clumps, the coagulating blood trailing down and staining the yellow shirt that was tucked underneath the black suit jacket and black slacks. Her hands trembled when she recognized the man laying bleeding on her store floor: Jyushimatsu Matsuno, one of the Matsuno family sextuplets -- the very same group that had threatened her into taking a 'protection fee' to keep her business running.

Part of her wanted to let him bleed out despite the fact that she'd get a harsher punishment for letting one of the core six die on her property while she remained idly by. Most of her wanted to help, but with no formal medical training she was flying blind in this situation.

"...phone..." His soft voice caught her attention, his left hand weakly trying to pull open the front jacket pocket. The woman acted as his hands, pulling out a bloodied cell phone and pushing the contact that he indicated to call. Throwing the call on speakerphone, she rushed to grab a towel from the front of the sales floor and shook it hard to ensure there were no glass shards sticking to it.

"

Matsuno residence.

"

"There's...one of the brothers here in my store. He's bleeding badly...address is 274B Clairmonte Road," The woman nearly shouted out as she pushed the towel against two wounds on his chest, a groan escaping his lips as the pressure grew, "Please help him!"

The line clicked dead, sending a pit of worry into her stomach as she looked back at the brother. His eyes were closed with a partial smile on his lips, his chest still rising and falling.

She kept pressure on the wounds until she heard a car screech to a stop outside her battered store, listening as three car doors closed before the crunch of glass announced their arrival inside the store. Before she could say anything, a rough hand shoved her aside and into a nearby display table, a man in a white doctor's coat kneeling in her place and checking over the brother's wounds.

"He's clear to be transported," Gently picking up the brother in his arms, the man stood up swiftly and carried him off, the woman's view cut off by someone standing in front of her. She swallowed hard and pressed her back into the table leg's edge as she made eye contact with the oldest brother of the family, the same sibling that 'persuaded' her to buy their protection.

While his dark hair and face matched the injured brother, his dark eyes were full of cunning and malice. The pressed red shirt was carefully tucked into

the black slacks, the complimenting black jacket resting on his shoulders as the oldest brother tugged down at his gold cufflinks.

"I suppose you're wanting some kind of reward for helping my little brother, then?" A lit cigarette danced between his lips as the corners curled into a smirk, the intentions plain for her to see in his eyes.

"No, sir...not at all...!" She shook her head, knowing that the oldest's 'gratitude' would be added onto what she owed them this month, "I was just...doing a civilian's duty, Mr. Osomatsu."

Osomatsu's eyes closed slightly, the smirk growing in amusement as he squatted down in front of her, his gloved hand reaching up and removing the cigarette from his mouth.

"That's awfully nice of you, doll," The smoke hit the woman in the face as he spoke, "Now, I suppose you're not going to ask me to repair your store for you, are you, Ms. (Y/n)?"

Refraining from coughing into Osomatsu's face, (y/n) only bit her bottom lip and shook her head.

"That's a good girl," Osomatsu lay a hand on her head and roughed up her hair, standing up and moving towards the broken front door, "I expect that this month's bill won't be impeded by this incident."

(Y/n) clenched her hands, holding her tongue to keep herself from talking back. Biting down on the cigarette, Osomatsu gave a satisfied glance back towards the floral shopkeeper before stepping out of the ruined storefront, leaving her alone while he and his brothers raced to fix up Jyushimatsu.

The cost to replace everything was expensive.

She went through the estimate that the window repair company gave her, as well as the receipt for the product that she lost, and ran her right hand

through her hair once more. The total for everything was well above five-thousand dollars, much more than she made in a single month.

(Y/n) had used the particle board storm panels to block her windows from sight and had spent most of the night sweeping up the broken glass within her store and scattered on the sidewalk in front of her store. Now she sat in the silent flower shop, staring down at the three financial sheets of paper while her mind worked out what she needed to sacrifice to even keep the store in her name.

"Mom, I don't know what to do..." She bit her bottom lip to try and hold back the tears, her fingers running through her hair once more. The flower shop was originally her mother's idea, starting the business and having it flourish under her care before she passed from cancer. When it was just the two of them, it was much easier.

"Are you still open?"

A voice cut through her thoughts as (y/n) looked up to see a young couple hold open the front door.

"Yes, we are," (Y/n) gave a genuine smile, "What can I help you with?"

"We were thinking of looking through your selection for an idea of a bouquet," The young woman offered as the man accompanying her mindlessly looked around the store, his eyes taking in the damaged windows.

"That shouldn't be an issue," Putting the bills underneath the countertop, (y/n) pulled out a small folder and started to go through it, "What kind of bouquet did you have in mind--?"

"What happened to the windows?" The man asked as he put his hands into his pants pockets.

"Just an accident last night. No need to worry about it," (Y/n) tried to bring their attention to the folder as the couple conversed in hushed whispers. Her smile partially fell as they made their way back through the front door, not

even excusing the obvious behavior. Slowly closing the bouquet folder, she tossed it underneath the counter with a light sigh before pulling out the bills and estimates.

The weeks passed slowly.

No new customers came in and the regulars only bought their usual order. The flower shop was bleeding money faster than it could earn it and that was before the repairs came into the picture.

Slowly, (y/n) began restricting her stock of flowers and only ordered the flowers that the regular customers wanted. The flowers that she still had were starting to wilt despite her best efforts at keeping them fresh and alive, eventually throwing them out when the flowers became too damaged for the display floor.

"Good morning, Ms. (Y/n)."

She could only stare at the two formally dressed people standing in the store before silently sighing as she moved towards them from the back room. Both of them were men; one was Osomatsu.

"Morning it is, but I'm not sure about the 'good' part, Mr. Osomatsu," She spoke carefully, bending down and grabbing hold of a simple metal box, setting it on top of the counter and unlocking the lid, "Here's your payment for the month."

Like the previous months, (y/n) took out a small manilla envelope and unwound the string holding the flap down, pulling out the cash and counting it out loud for him to hear, stacking it neatly again before sliding the money back into the envelope and pushing it towards him. She'd starved herself for most of the month to just make the full payment.

"Wonderful," Osomatsu smiled as he tucked the envelope into a pocket on the inside of his suit jacket, looking around the shop before lowering his gaze back to (y/n), "I hope you have enough left to repair this run-down flower shack."

Without waiting for a response, he turned around and walked out the front door, the glass still bearing a few bullet holes from that night.

(Y/n) withheld from speaking, looking towards the other man that had accompanied Osomatsu to see Jyushimatsu staring at her. He reached into his suit jacket and pulled out a white letter envelope, setting it down quietly on the counter with a gentle nod before following his older brother. She let the bell on the door die down as she eyed the white envelope warily, eventually gathering enough courage to pick it up and open it.

Inside was a folded piece of paper and a small stack of cash.

Not more extortion...

(Y/n) groaned to herself before pouring out the contents onto the counter, her eyes growing wide as the bills she was expecting to be tens or twenties turned to be hundreds. Scrambling for the folded letter, (y/n) covered her mouth as she read the paper for a large order of custom bouquets and centerpieces. A

large

order, much larger than she'd had before for a private birthday party or wedding.

A smaller piece of paper settled on the counter, falling from the back of the order. Picking it up, she saw an invitation to the yearly ball that the Matsuno family hosted, not as a guest but as the

main florist

.

Part of her wanted to run screaming from the city, knowing that all kinds of shady people were going to be there. Other mafia families, smaller contractors that the Matsunos worked with...

However, there was enough money here to jumpstart her flower shop again. The amount could pay for the windows, the flower stock, and her living

expenses for a year...

"Last...one..."

(Y/n) muttered as she arranged the flower spread on the last vacant table, pushing and pulling it until it looked perfectly centered on the white tablecloth. She stood up with a smile, wiping her hands off on the back pockets of her jeans and admiring her handiwork spread throughout the giant banquet hall.

The window repairmen were starting on their task when she had left to deliver the flower arrangements and should be finishing up by the time she stopped back at the shop to change for the ball, a fresh stock of flowers would be delivered to the store in the next few days, and she had eaten one of the biggest breakfasts someone could order from a family restaurant.

It was a good ending to a crummy month...but she still needed to survive the night.

She had to rent a nice gown for the ball, as the nicest clothing she actually owned were a nice pair of black jeans and a longer shirt that she used to wear to job interviews. (Y/n) ran a hand through her hair, thinking that she'd need to shower before coming back.

"Ms. (Y/n)?" A man called out from behind her, drawing her attention and turning to see Jyushimatsu standing near a doorway. He was dressed down from what she last saw him in, just wearing the black slacks, yellow shirt, and black suspenders. He seemed to think of what to say next before opening his mouth, "May I...have a word with you?"

(Y/n) paled, but tried to keep her face as neutral as possible.

"Of course. What can I help you with?"

"Out here...please," He casually waved a hand towards the door that he had come through, only walking through when he was certain that she was

following. The hallway was empty except for a few servants that were busying themselves with their individual chores, leaving both Jyushimatsu and (y/n) alone for a moment.

(Y/n) opened her mouth to repeat the question when Jyushimatsu cut her off.

"I wanted...to apologize."

"Apologize for what?" A confused look settled on her face.

"For ruining your shop," The bright look that had always been in his eyes dulled a little, his smile turning into a partial frown, "There was a scuffle that started down the street and it moved to right in front of your shop before I could de-escalate it."

"That's not your fault," She raised an eyebrow, "It's not like you were the one that made them shoot out the windows."

"No...but that street's part of my territory and I want to make sure that everyone can feel safe there," Jyushimatsu's lips turned into a full frown, "Plus...I really like looking at your flowers when I walk there, so seeing your windows boarded up was...a bad reminder."

(Y/n) lowered her gaze to the floor, his words confirming her thoughts: she wasn't invited to work at the ball because of her skills or talent, but because

he

felt guilty.

The food still in her stomach started to turn sour, making her gut twist as she raised her gaze back to him.

"The...thought is appreciated, Mr. Jyushimatsu. I'm happy to be under the protection of someone so kind," The words tasted like ash as she spoke them, giving a low bow, "If you'll excuse me, I still need to prepare for tonight."

Her feet carried her away from Jyushimatsu, finding their way towards the vehicle she had rented for the delivery and driving off of the massive property before turning towards her flower shop. Her jaw was tense, hurting from being clenched so hard as a thought pierced through the fog in her mind.

She was a pity invite. Nothing more than that.

He had felt bad for ruining her livelihood and tried to make it better by making her the ball florist, offering enough money to save her store...to ensure that

he

got enough 'protection payment' from her.

She slammed the vehicle into 'park' after fully stopping, her brow furrowing in anger towards herself.

There wasn't anything she could do about it. She

had

to attend or the Matsuno family would find a way to spin this against her, possibly claiming that she destroyed her own shop intentionally.

After stopping in the flower shop to see that the windows were installed, she locked down the storefront and ensured that the register was completely empty of money. Unlocking the small door to the upstairs apartment, she made her way up the steep staircase and opened the door leading into the barebones apartment.

Jyushimatsu had tried to stop (y/n) from leaving, but the tears in her eyes prevented him from touching her.

He was confused.

He had done everything that Choromatsu had suggested, from the payments of the damages he caused to the ball invitation. When he offered a spoken apology, he was honest with how he felt and tried to express how sorry he was about the damages...

so why was (y/n) still sad?

"You don't stand still for this long often," A familiar voice called out in front of Jyushimatsu, drawing his attention while a smile spread across his face.

"Big brother Karamatsu. I'm just trying to fix a problem," Jyushimatsu closed his eyes for a moment while the smile widened.

"What kind of problem?" The blue-clad brother stopped a few feet in front of the younger, lifting a hand to run through the partially gelled hair, "Anything I can help with?"

"Maybe," Jyushimatsu raised a hand to cover his mouth, "I need to apologize to a girl."

"Ah, girl problems then," Karamatsu shifted his weight onto his left leg, leaning on it heavily, "What kind of girl is troubling you?"

"The street fight from earlier this month damaged her store and she says that she's happy...but she was crying when she left. I don't know what's wrong."

"It sounds like this girl doesn't know what she's feeling. Women can be fickle with their emotions at times, wanting something while desiring something else completely. If she's coming to the ball tonight, then you could try to smooth things over with a little wine and dine," The older brother gave a small laugh, "If she's in the right mindset, maybe you could take her to your room afterwards."

Jyushimatsu paused in his answer, processing what Karamatsu was suggesting. He and Osomatsu were more experienced with women than the other brothers, bedding a few almost nightly.

"I can help get the process started for y--" Karamatsu was cut off by the glare Jyushimatsu was giving him, his wide eyes locked onto the older brother's in a challenge to finish the sentence. With a partial smirk, Karamatsu walked away and left Jyushimatsu alone.

The younger brother hated the thought of someone else talking to (y/n), but became more confused about why than anything else.

(Y/n) had parked near the back of the Matsuno mansion, cleared by the guards after they checked everything about the rental van. She went through a physical inspection after providing her invitation, cleared to enter through the service door near the kitchen. Making her way slowly through the halls, she found the ballroom.

The room was massive and clearly intended for showing off the family's wealth, lined with statues and paintings of varying rarity. Tables were strewn throughout the room, fully displaying the centerpieces of her own creation that drew the eye without demanding attention, with different hors d'oeuvres spread out around them while leaving some space for those that wanted to sit and rest.

Most of the women that accompanied the men were dressed in elegant gowns, the color rivaling her flowers as they spun and danced on the wooden floor. The men were donning their tails or flat jackets, most of them monochromatic to compliment the women's colors while a few others had color interwoven into the outfit.

Six of them stood out with their loud outfits. Black jackets with thick dashes of color sewn into the fabric, mirroring the pants that had the same fabric style. Bold colors adorned their pressed shirts underneath their black vests, each marking the individual from the group.

The Matsuno sextuplets.

(Y/n) kept her distance from them. They may have been the people that invited her here out of pity, but she couldn't let herself cozy up to them. She

was one of their many living piggy banks and wasn't going to be anything else in their eyes unless it suited their purposes.

The dancing started in earnest as the band the Matsunos hired began to play longer songs, most of the attendees dancing as one with the music while others stayed on the outskirts and talked amongst themselves, clapping when the songs ended.

"May I have this dance?"

(Y/n) stopped walking when she heard someone quietly ask her from behind, seeing a man around her age extending a white-gloved hand out while giving her a bow.

"I'm sorry...I'll have to decline," She shook her head before the man reached out and grabbed her hand, pulling her close to him while tucking her arm under his.

"It wasn't a request," The vocal tone of the man turned dark, warning of an unseen threat as he pulled her onto the dance floor. (Y/n) paled and tried to pull away from him, swallowing a yell of pain when the man dug his fingers into her arm, glancing down towards her with a glare.

"Please stop..." She whispered as his hands positioned her for the next dance, feeling his thumb rub against her own as they started to move together, "I'm a horrible dancer, and I don't want to tarnish your reputation--
"

"With the way they've been watching you, I doubt that you'll do such a thing," The man leaned down towards her, his breath caressing her ear and making her skin crawl, "I'm sure that you're some big prize to them, so I'm going to use you for my own gain. Thanks in advance."

"I'm no such thing," (Y/n) stopped mid-stride, bringing the two to a halt near the edge of the dance floor, "You have the wrong idea about me and who I am."

"Please," He scoffed as he forcefully pulled her back into the rhythm, "Don't flatter yourself. Everyone is here because the Matsunos have partnered with them, whether it's for business or personal means."

She pulled away from him, shaking off his hand with a glare, "As I said, you have the wrong idea about me."

Taking a step away from him after turning around, she felt the man grab her hand before he pulled her

off the dance floor, dragging her through the spectating crowd before leading her towards an open doorway. The heels she wore couldn't gain any traction on the wooden floor, wanting to stop herself and make him let go.

"Stop it...!"

"If you're not here for them, then--"

A hand reached out and grabbed his collar tightly, twisting it so the man couldn't break free from its grip. Another hand held onto her upper arm gently, opposing the desperate grip that the man had on her hand.

"

Where are you taking my guest?

"

The man instantly let go of her, the shock registering on his face as he turned towards the speaker.

"Mr. Jyushimatsu, I'm sorry," He raised both hands in surrender, "This unruly guest was being a nuisance, so I wanted to remove her from the ball before the attention distracted you from enjoying tonight."

(Y/n) narrowed her eyes, "

You

were the one that was unruly, practically dragging me everywhere when I kept telling you 'no'!"

The man shifted a glare towards her, "You wouldn't stop bothering me for a dance."

Jyushimatsu's mouth turned into a slight frown, releasing the man before shoving him away. With a small flourish, he gently tucked (y/n)'s hand under his arm and started walking down the hall, ignoring the protests of the other man.

"My brothers will deal with him..." Jyushimatsu said softly before turning towards her with a wide smile, "I'm glad that you came back, Ms. (Y/n)."

She only returned the smile, not wanting to say what was really on her mind. Jyushimatsu stopped walking after they turned the corner, making (y/n) glance over at him in confusion before looking away.

"Do I scare you?"

The question caught her off-guard, some fear recognizable in her eyes as she looked back into his dark hues. His eyelids slightly lowered, her reaction speaking louder than any words she could say.

(Y/n) had

always

been scared of him, the fear dictating her actions when it came to his questions.

"I'm not going to be mad, Ms. (Y/n). I just want the truth," Jyushimatsu took a breath before holding her gaze, "Would you have even come here tonight if you were given the choice?"

(Y/n) opened her mouth to respond before cutting herself off, lowering her eyes and shaking her head 'no'. He fully closed his eyes and took in a breath.

"No one's forcing you to be here, so you're able to leave whenever you want," He let her hand drop from his arm, "I...would like to spend more time with you, though."

"I have to stay..." She responded to his offer, "I have to stay through the whole event, or I'm going to get into trouble with Mr. Osomatsu."

"Why would you get into trouble with my big brother?"

"If I do anything to slight your family...then everything I've worked for could be taken away from me," (Y/n) put a hand over her mouth, a shudder racing through her body as her voice gave words to the thoughts she never wanted to acknowledge. Any slight grievance towards the Matsunos could put an end to the small flower shop, the last thing that reminded her of her family. Tears streamed down her cheeks and pooled against her hands as she pressed both palms on her face, no longer able to stand on her own two feet.

Jyushimatsu caught her before she could fall, holding her trembling frame against him as she cried into the nicely pressed suit.

He was stunned, the smile completely falling from his face. The smile that she had given him the past few years was out of fear of losing everything she had.

Jyushimatsu lay a hand on the back of her head, the clothing muffling her cries as she let everything go, her hands clinging to him for support as his other arm wrapped around her back. Some staff passed by without uttering a word, leaving the two alone while (y/n) slowly calmed herself down. He simply offered a handkerchief when she lifted her head up, her trembling hand taking it before wiping off her face.

"Please...don't get mad," Her throat was tight, "I-I can pay for the suit to be cleaned."

"I don't care about that," Jyushimatsu cut her off, keeping her pressed against him, "I want to make sure that

you're

okay."

"Mr. Jyushimatsu, I assure you that I'm fine," (Y/n) tried to lightly push herself away from him.

"No, you're not. I can hear it in your voice," He lifted her head towards him with a hand, "You're still scared of me."

"Why wouldn't I be?" The color in her eyes suddenly hardened, "Your family has stores closed down for smaller reasons than soiling a nice suit of yours! I can't lose the flower shop, not when I've worked so hard to keep it under my name..."

"How much was it worth when you bought it?"

"M-my mom did...for $160,000. Why?"

"I'll buy the business and you can keep the rights to the shop," The smile returned to his face, Jyushimatsu's heart beating quickly as he watched a torrent of emotions fly across (y/n)'s face. First it was shock, followed by realization, uncertainty, and confusion before she looked back up at him.

"But--"

"I like seeing you happy, Ms. (Y/n)," He didn't bother to hide the blush reddening his cheeks, "I always have...it's why I wanted to make sure that the street you work on stayed safe, and why I wanted to promote your spreads to the people that I work with tonight. When I see you smiling at the flowers when I walk by, it calms me down."

(Y/n) remained silent for a little while before laughing a bit, softly at first before digging her face into his shoulder again. Confusion rested on Jyushimatsu's face before she spoke again.

"You know...that's a really creepy thing to say to a woman."

"Yeah, I realized that when I said it," He gave her a wide smile as his eyebrows pinched together in apology, "I'm not the best at saying stuff. That's why I'm not in charge of diplomatic relations."

"If it's okay with you, Mr. Jyushimatsu, I'd like to ask for time to think about your proposition," (Y/n) took a step back from him, his arms allowing her to leave, "It sounds like a deal that's too good to be true, so I want to think it over."

"Why? I can have the check ready tonight if you'd like."

"The money would be nice, but I'd like to get to know my new landlord better," The smile on her face was genuine, making Jyushimatsu's heart skip a beat, "I can't agree to sign the property over to someone who's a tyrant."

His eyes widened as her words finally registered her intent. With his open smile, Jyushimatsu closed his eyes and nodded.

"I promise that he's not."

Jyushimatsu and Reader

"I'm back," Jyushimatsu whispered with enthusiasm into the small apartment, his arms fully loaded with groceries that would last for most of the week, "Did you miss me?"

"Welcome back," A soft voice called from within the apartment, a woman standing up from the couch visible from the front door, "Just set the groceries in the kitchen and I'll organize them."

"Can I help?" He complied as the woman gently made her way over, practically vibrating to hold in his excitement at seeing her.

"You can if you're able," She gave a small smile -- more like a twitch in the corner of her lips than an actual smile. Jyushimatsu nodded enthusiastically and brought everything into the small kitchen, helping the woman put away groceries.

As she closed the fridge door, he couldn't help but smile at her.

Her name was (y/n), his secret friend.

"Would you like to watch something? I know that you have plans for dinner with your family," (Y/n)'s offer sounded more like a plea to Jyushimatsu, taking the subtle hint.

"Of course. Did you have something in mind?" He stayed close as they moved from the kitchen to the common room, sitting down on the couch as (y/n) grabbed the TV remote before settling on the cushion next to him. Jyushimatsu knew the reason why she had called him over -- it had become their weekly ritual to spend almost an entire day together at her place. Jyushimatsu would buy groceries for the day -- plus whatever else she needed -- and he'd stay with her as they went through (y/n)'s wants that she found throughout the week.

"Just a few movies and a TV show," Aiming the remote at the TV, (y/n) brought up a streaming service and clicked over to a tab marked as 'Watchlist'. The highlighted marker hovered over the TV show first before she turned to him, "Are you...sure that you're okay with doing this?"

"I would rather be here with you than let you do this alone," Jyushimatsu's voice quieted for a moment, letting his smile grow wider, "I'll laugh for the both of us, I'll smile for you, and I'll be here when it gets too much."

The twitch in the corner of her lips appeared again, staying just a little bit longer before (y/n) rested her left hand on his right knee, "Just...don't freak out, okay?"

"I won't."

The same promise that she made him repeat every time he came over. Jyushimatsu knew the boundaries after they had met on the street, abandoning his gimmicks when he found out that

he

was the one causing her problems. What worked for Homura during her yearly stays had triggered (y/n)'s problems.

He had his brother, Ichimatsu, to thank for his current toned-down demeanor. After all, they had twenty-something years of watching each other and their reactions to different situations.

The TV show started -- a well-known comedy show that (y/n) had been wanting to watch for months. Jyushimatsu felt her hand tense on his knee, reaching down to hold it carefully and prepared himself to do his job.

Whenever a joke hit, he laughed.

When a physical comedy gag hit, he laughed.

Jyushimatsu laughed loudly for both of them because (y/n) didn't want to laugh. It wasn't because she couldn't, but because she shouldn't.

The first time they had met on the street, Jyushimatsu thought that she was having a rough day, her face completely set into a neutral expression and her eyes downcast as she walked as close as she could to the buildings. He yelled out for her to have a good day as he passed next to her and she jumped, leaning heavily against the building shortly afterwards and starting to fall forward.

Jyushimatsu had caught her, looking around in worry before he brought her to a nearby bench to sit down. She startled up in his arms, trying to push them away before he frantically explained what happened and who he was.

She had thanked him for helping her, promptly moving out of his reach and finding her surroundings before heading back in the direction she was originally walking.

It wasn't until the next time that they met that he found out his hyperactive self was too much for her to handle.

(Y/n) had narcolepsy, the fits often accompanied by cataplexy attacks.

Jyushimatsu felt her hand fall limp on his knee, her fingers sliding across his shin as he pulled himself from his memories. Quickly reaching behind her shoulders, he pinned them to his chest in a hug, holding her up as (y/n)'s head lolled forward over his other arm.

The TV show played in the tense silence, the sextuplet nearly holding his breath as he waited for (y/n)'s brain to awaken from the attack, biting his bottom lip and scolding himself mentally for not paying attention to what was happening on screen. It always felt like forever, but was never more than thirty seconds.

(Y/n)'s head yanked itself up, her eyes wide and looking around to quickly assess her surroundings. Jyushimatsu didn't let go until he felt her body relax from the sudden tension.

"...Oh, I'm sorry," She pressed the heels of her palms into her eyes, rubbing them slowly as she took a deep breath, "I couldn't help it."

"It's not a bad thing to laugh, (y/n)," Jyushimatsu offered a wide smile, letting his arms fall to his sides as he went back to his usual sitting position, "I'm here to keep you safe, so you can laugh if you really want to. I'll always be here when you wake up."

(Y/n) lowered her hands as he spoke, looking up at the screen before switching her gaze to him. She rested her hands on his left hand, clasping it gently as a genuine smile reached her lips.

"Would you like to keep watching?"

Jyushimatsu's dark hues never left her face as his smile grew.

"Whatever you want."

Billionaire/Mobster!Jyushimatsu and Reader

Osomatsu - Osowald "Skeleton" Mats

Karamatsu - Kalaus "Chaffeur" Mats

Choromatsu - Chorold "Mock" Mats

Ichimatsu - Itidor "Baker" Mats

Jyushimatsu - Juschibert "Trash" Mats

Todomatsu - Todias "Bananas" Mats

"You know what's happening tonight, don't you?" Her worried voice was tense as her hand tried to keep steady while applying a heavy layer of vibrant red lipstick to her top lip, the nervous look in her eyes hard to miss in her reflection.

"...everyone does..." Another voice responded, drawing the first woman's attention to look at the mirror to see a younger woman standing behind her, both using the same mirror to 'doll up' before the show. The younger woman met her stare before brushing out her hair, fluffing it up a little as she hummed to herself.

Both of them knew what the stakes were tonight and they knew exactly who they were going to play for.

The Mats family, a sextuplet set of brothers that had viciously clawed their way to the top by dethroning the old mobster family that had protected the area for years, generations even. No one knew where these young men

came from and no one knew if they'd keep the same peace that the old mobsters had, and that made

everyone

nervous.

The club that both women worked for had received a warning that the Mats family was going to be dropping by later on that night, creating a chaotic atmosphere that was quietly contained by the man in charge of the business.

Randall Hetsam was a calm and collected businessman that looked out for every person on his payroll, like a father that would watch over his children, and every employee felt that they could rely on him. So when he walked out onto the floor only hours ago with a shaken expression, no one was easy or carefree like they usually were before they opened the business doors.

'Perform as if they're not here, but ensure that you cast most of your attention to their tables' were the words he chose to say to his staff, his black hair not-so-neatly combed like it usually was.

"Have you heard anything about our guests from other clubs?" The young woman set her brush down on the makeup table and picked up some heavy mascara, layering it on thick enough to give each eyelash weight. Swapping the mascara for blush, she repeated the application on her cheeks to give them enough shade to appear life-like underneath the harsh stage lights.

"Nothing at all," The older woman shook her head slightly, "This is apparently the first time that the Mats family is strolling the city."

"Then we need to do our best..."

A black, elongated car rolled to a stop along the curb of the street, the driver stepping out in his formal attire and carefully making his way to the curbside, reaching out and opening the passenger door. At first, one man

stepped out of the car before he was followed by another, stepping aside to adjust his attire as his unique silver gaze swept across the sidewalk.

"For a place that's well-talked about, it doesn't appear to be much," The last man commented as he stepped out of the car, the driver closing the door behind him and moving back to the driver's seat, "Ah, just bring it back around in an hour or so. I can't imagine that we'll be here for very long if

this

is what it looks like on the outside."

"Looks can be deceiving, Todias," The first man commented, walking towards the front door, "You should know that more than anyone."

"Right..." Todias glanced to the side with a grimace, "I'm still not keeping my hopes up."

"Osowald is correct, little brother," One of the other four called out, drawing the youngest's attention to the man in a blue suit jacket with thin white stripes, "Appearances tend to hide the inner beauty of such places."

"Oh, shut it, Kalaus," A brother pushed past him with a grimace, tucking his hands into his checkered tan pants pockets, "You could find the 'inner beauty' of everything that's wrong with this world..."

"I'm so excited to see the pretty girls!" The man wearing a hat quickly took it off before entering the establishment, his smile widening as his silver eyes darted around to look at the people politely giving him a smile back as the family walked by them.

"Keep it in your pants, Jushibert," Osowald sneered back, locking eyes with another brother, "Itidor, make sure he doesn't chase after anyone."

"Why is that my job?" Itidor scoffed in disgust, lowering his head a little as he looked at the hyperactive brother called Jushibert, "There isn't a human alive who can control

that

."

"Wasn't there something in your room that you're rather fond of?" The last brother lightly questioned, his index finger resting gently on the side of his chin as his metallic gaze lowered to Itidor's own, "It would be quite a blessing if it were to multiply, wouldn't it?"

Itidor's eyes widened before he looked down towards his feet, fighting down a rising blush before glancing over at the aforementioned brother walking off on his own, straightening out as he pursued the wayward man.

"Really, Chorold?" Osowald barely lifted an eyebrow at the change in attitude, "You're gonna let him grow his feline collection?"

"He's got a big enough room at home and he's successfully managed to keep them all fed and healthy despite owning five of them," Chorold's pointed smile barely widened, "Why not reward such good animal husbandry for a small favor?"

The two brothers wandered off, one following the other as he explored the club. Jushibert gazed in awe at the lavish decorations that were scattered throughout the hallways and rooms, only stopping once he opened a side door that led to the rather large entertainment room.

Several round tables had been arranged so that everyone who was seated would have a view of the stage performers. The stage itself was barely higher than seats, allowing those who were seated to have a decent view without straining their head.

"Whoa..." The younger of the two brothers laughed a little as he walked into the room, the older quickly following behind, "The outside didn't look

anything

like this."

"Most clubs try to keep a neutral look on their exterior," Itidor commented as he gazed around the room, partially impressed himself, "Something

about dissuading thieves and criminals from robbing them."

"But we're criminals," Jushibert looked back at Itidor.

"Yeah, but the difference is that we've got the law under our thumb," The oldest was quick to respond, "There's a large difference between what we are and a petty carjacker."

"That being?"

"Respect and fear."

Both men were silenced by someone humming a scale while a few piano keys were plinked for the vocal tuning, their attention drawn to the stage as the back curtain was partially drawn to expose someone's back. The dress was dazzling under the regular room lights, the color seeming to be a perfect fit on the woman wearing it.

"Ah, shoot," The humming stopped, "Can I try that again?"

"Go ahead," Someone else responded, the piano playing the same keys once more as the humming picked up. Jushibert and Itidor quietly moved towards the stage, the older's hands still in his pockets while the younger crossed his arms across the lip of the stage.

"That was a bit better, I think..." The singer moved out of sight of the curtain opening.

"You're going to need to take it gently, (y/n). That cough you've had for the past week won't do you any favors now."

"I know...but if

they're

here, then I need to be in tiptop shape."

Itidor tapped Jushibert on the shoulder, tilting his head towards the back of the room to see the other four brothers had entered with another man.

Jushibert nodded before looking back towards the stage, his eyes partially closing in thought before snapping wide when his silver gaze met the colored gaze of the singer, her figure completely freezing up as they looked at each other.

He held his hat against his chest and gave a slight bow before turning towards his family.

Oh, she had messed up royally!

The silver hues of the Mats family was unmistakable, instantly letting (y/n) know who she had been staring at.

"(Y/n), you're trembling. You're not getting sick again, are you?" The pianist asked cautiously, looking between her form and the slightly open curtain, "I can close that if it's getting too cold for you."

"N-no, I'll be all right...I just can't get distracted."

"Sweetie, you can ask Rachel to cover you if you need time."

"No, Kathy," (Y/n) turned away from where the Mats brother had been standing, shaking her head, "I need to go through with this. If I can't sing in front of the family that rules the city, then I can't sing in front of anyone."

"(Y/n), you know that if you push yourself too much, then--" The pianist started before the vocalist shook her head.

"I can

do

this."

"If you're sure, sweetheart..."

The piano was soft as the voice slowly began to keep up with the rising notes, the last few high notes catching the attention of three other men in the room.

"The doll ain't too bad."

The woman singing on stage was the same one that Jushibert had seen warming up, letting himself get lost in her songs as his brothers merely listened passively while talking with another boss that was supposed to act as their host here. His ears instantly perked up when the eldest brother let the comment hang in the air, his wide smile partially fading as Jushibert glanced towards Osowald, the eldest's eyes slowly lowering to look directly at him.

"...wouldn't you say?"

"She's nice," Jushibert sank in his seat a little more, folding his arms across his chest as he tried to act nonchalant about the comment, "Too much makeup, though."

"Most dolls have to wear that ghastly amount of makeup to appear more human under those kinds of lights," Todias remarked, leaning back in his seat as his attention was solely focused on his fingernails, carefully manicuring them.

"If it's too much, sirs, then I can ask the manager to have her remove some of that cover-up between sets," The local boss suggested as his fingers intertwined with each other, his hands resting on the table as they all waited for the food to arrive, "That singer is known for being a bit too flashy."

Jushibert kept his thoughts at bay, knowing that his older brothers were supposed to settle some kind of deal tonight and any objection that would interrupt that was usually punished back at home.

He wouldn't admit out loud that he actually really liked the makeup that the singer was wearing, showing that she had enough experience working under

the lights to ensure that she looked alive, the yellowed lights not doing the set any favors. He also wouldn't admit that her singing was like a lullaby to him and him alone, her voice soft and soothing despite the cigar smoke that permeated the room. The pianist wasn't terrible, either, but Jushibert's sole attention was focused on the singer.

His mind began to wonder how much it would cost for him to hire her for a solo performance...

"Forgive me, Mr. Mats, but there's been news of the back entrance no longer being safe to use," The words of the manager whispered carefully at the table, the man having to lean in to ensure that he wasn't overheard, "My employees are currently removing some unsavory folk that were insistent that they meet you."

"Appreciated," Osowald nodded as the song ended with a piano flourish, his hands mindlessly adding to the clapping as Jushibert applauded as calmly as he could, "Todias, go ahead and call the car around to the front. We'll be taking our leave."

The fifth brother quickly looked up as the oldest stood when the curtain closed over the stage, muttering something to the local boss before making his way towards the door they had come in from and leaving the others to fall in line. Jushibert's gut yelled at him to stay, to stop getting up from the chair and wait until the show was completely over, his expression revealing what he was thinking about.

The decision was made for him when he felt a hand rest on his shoulder and pushed him back down into his seat, Itidor moving his plate over and sitting next to him in silence.

(Y/n) swallowed the whole cup of water nervously, both to quench her thirst and to calm her nerves that were on fire.

Her entire set had gone off without a hitch, the crowd having the same mindset as the performers in regards to the special guests that were

announced before she had even stepped on stage. Kathy had performed very well under the pressure, but (y/n) couldn't say the same for herself. She had counted every flat and sharp note that her voice refused to hit, but Kathy was able to change the music key to accommodate that so that it appeared to be planned.

(Y/n) had seen a majority of the Mats family leave after the third set, some of her anxiety settling before she had spotted their table still holding occupants. Unsure if they were still there, she gave the table the same attention like she had earlier just in case.

Now that the entertainment was over for the night (a grueling two hours long spread out over many breaks), the crowd was on their way out the door to enjoy the nightlife that both the club and city offered. (Y/n) had stayed back to get undressed and remove the stage makeup that created her fake appearance, being one of the last employees to leave out the back door.

The others had taken their leave after the kitchen closed for the night, officially closing the 'formal entertainment' part of the club while opening the 'night entertainment' where the guests could enjoy more intimate company that was away from prying eyes. (Y/n) shook her head at the thought, gathering her things and quietly walking towards the back door as her fancy stage dress lay over her right arm, both heels tucked away in a paper bag that her right hand held tightly. While getting dressed down, she had heard of a scuffle near the back alley through the grapevine towards the middle of the evening set, but didn't give it more than a thought.

Scuffles near the club were common, mostly from drunkards that couldn't understand in their inebriated state that they couldn't bring the women home with them. The staff were quick to respond to such fights and kept them out of the public's eye so it wouldn't ruin the reputation.

Using her left hand to push open the back door, (y/n) shuddered in her long coat as the crisp autumn air was much chillier than the weatherman had predicted. Ensuring that the door was firmly closed behind her, (y/n) tucked her right arm close to her abdomen as she began the long walk to her apartment across town.

The apartment was small, just the right size for herself and the rent was quite affordable when she was bringing in money at the club. It may not be everyone's favorite thing to come home to, but she had worked hard for it and made it as comfortable as she could.

She had heard the footsteps following her, taking unnecessary turns to ensure that the person was actively tailing her while trying to get a look at who it was behind her without being obvious about it.

Her eyes widened as her blood ran cold, the looming figure nearly a foot taller than herself and dressed in ragged clothes. There had been talk of a stranger wandering around the city at night, stealing young women off of the street and dumping them on the outskirts of the desert that surrounded the city on all sides. It didn't matter to (y/n) if she knew she didn't fit the stranger's profile for the women; she was walking alone at night, and that's all that may have mattered to the stranger.

Another turn led her down a tight alleyway, one that she knew of very well. It may have looked like a dead-end to someone who had never been here before, but there was a small passageway that broke off towards the rear, creating a small path between two buildings that was hard to see from the entrance. (Y/n) had used this path many times to slip away from someone that had tried to follow her home, and she intended to use it once more.

Veering into the tight corridor between the two buildings, (y/n) let out a breath and sidestepped the whole way through, leaving behind the person following her as she stepped out onto the next road over. She didn't hear the person make any sounds of frustration, so it was possible that they weren't even following her intentionally.

"Nice try, dollface."

Letting out a sharp scream in surprise, (y/n) jumped in her skin before fighting off the person who suddenly clamped their hand down over her mouth. Scratching at their clammy skin with her nails before trying to reach over to their eyes, she opened her nostrils and screamed again, the sound reverberating through the nasal passages.

"None of that now, dove," The gruff voice barely laughed out as they simply moved their hand upward and completely covered (y/n)'s nose and mouth, stifling the sound she was making and cutting off her air supply, "You can save that for me later."

(Y/n) paled as she recognized the same profile of the person that had been following her, confusion rising as she knew the person couldn't fit through the passageway, not with their size. They leaned in close, the ragged hood of their rough fur coat only revealing a grizzled chin that was scarred beyond belief, the angular lips spreading into a triumphant smile.

"Pretty dove for my soiled collection," The man leaned even closer before flinching away, his head turning towards something behind him. A feral growl rumbled through his throat as his grip grew tighter on (y/n)'s face, her flailing becoming weaker.

"We gave you free reign for animal prey," A calm voice spoke out from wherever the man was looking, the tone marking it as male. (Y/n) tried desperately to peel back the man's hand just enough to breathe, fighting against her own body shutting down as her lungs began to burn, "This is not what we agreed to."

"You gave me rights to hunt within a certain area. She wandered in," The man lowered his arm, but his hand didn't flinch from (y/n)'s face, "Not my fault she doesn't know agreement."

"I don't think you understand where you're standing, dog," The voice grew stern, "You're standing well within the Mats territory and we don't take kindly to rulebreakers that brazenly hunt within our borders."

(Y/n) fought to keep her eyes open, her hands falling limply from the man's own still clamped down over her face, hearing some ferocious animal growl and snarl before she lost consciousness.

He had given the warnings that he was told to recite to any intruder on their territory, withholding his rage at the sight of the singer from the club

dangling almost lifeless from the man's hand. His mind yelled at him to jump into the fight immediately, to force the stray to drop the woman and to kill him for even trying to expand his territory against their rules.

The stray snarled in response to his growl, crouching into a defensive position as the woman still in his grip grew limp, the man hunkering down over her like he was trying to defend a fresh kill. Tossing aside his hat and jacket, Jushibert lunged forward as his body rippled and swelled with muscle and fur. The shirt burst open in the front as brown fur seeped through his skin, instantly covering it while his face elongated and narrowed into a snarling muzzle, sharp teeth gnashing as they bit down around the man's neck.

He wasn't fast enough, his teeth biting down on fur that was just as thick as his own, creating natural armor that covered his entire body.

Jushibert pulled away for a brief second before closing back in, his changing body matching the other man's in height as his upper lip pulled back in a vicious snarl, revealing the enlarged teeth of a wolf.

"Let her go."

"The dove is

mine

," The stranger countered before Jushibert snapped his jaw, the now fully transformed werewolf charging into the one holding the woman. The man had shifted into a werewolf just like Jushibert, his fur black and ragged like his coat, revealing several scars that had been given to him over the years and betraying his rank of stray. The brown werewolf bit down harshly on the wrist that now encapsulated the human's head, his teeth piercing through the tough skin as he clamped down harder to prevent himself from being thrown off, his own neck being bitten at by the other.

A tendon snapped in the werewolf's wrist, loosening the grip and allowing the woman to fall to the ground. As Jushibert's eyes caught the movement, he yanked at the werewolf to drag him away from the human, a deep growl

rolling in his chest as his silver eyes now fixated on the stranger's pure black hues.

The stranger released his neck and tried to bite down on Jushibert's muzzle, the brown werewolf letting go and digging his claws into the fur along his chest, getting close and heaving upwards. A quick glance down at where the human had fallen revealed another man kneeling next to her, his silver eyes meeting Jushibert's with a nod before gathering her in his arms.

"My dove!" The stranger yelled out in anger as he caught the sight, his own claws digging into Jushibert's sides and tried to gain some leverage before he was violently thrown against a nearby building, rubble falling on him as a large hole opened up in the brick wall.

"Not yours," Jushibert stood as tall as his hunched form would allow, "Mine!"

"Mine! My dove! My doll!" The intruding werewolf burst from the hole in a fury of teeth and claws, charging towards the brown werewolf that had placed himself between the fleeing pair and the aggressor, "You're nothing but a pet!"

Jushibert remained silent as his opponent charged closer, his silver hues locked onto an old wound that had opened up in the fight near the other werewolf's shoulder. He had to end this quickly before the noise drew a crowd, narrowing his focus before charging in faster than the enemy could react. His massive jaw clamped down on the bleeding wound as the momentum from the opposing charges forced both werewolves to collide in the street, Jushibert using the force to bite down harder.

Bone and sinew crunched between his teeth and, when he was satisfied that he had enough of a bite, yanked his muzzle away from the shoulder. Blood sprayed from the new wound as the stray's left arm suddenly went limp, all muscles that had been connected through the .shoulder joint now torn asunder and ripped away. The stray howled both in pain and victory as Jushibert's right hip flared in agony, his own waist bearing a large gash that nearly exposed the pelvic bone as blood poured down his right leg.

"You...will not have my doll..." The stray muttered through a laugh, his body laying limply on the ground as his head lolled back against the cobblestone, "You...will not..."

Jushibert snarled before grabbing his throat, clamping down hard and shaking his head from side to side violently, hearing a satisfying snap between his jaws before he let go. He found himself laying on his left side on the cobblestone, unsure of how he got there as his hands pressed against the wounded hip.

"Jushibert...!"

He thought he heard someone calling his name, seeing the man from before running back towards him. The woman wasn't with him.

"--uck was he doing all the way out there?!"

"Hell if I know! He just ran off and I followed."

"...too loud..." The pounding headache pulsed between Jushibert's ears as he raised both hands to try and soothe the thrumming in his head. He slowly opened his eyes to recognize the small doctor's office that was in his family's house, his formal clothes completely removed while a simple white sheet covered his lower body.

"You deserve it, Trash!" An angry voice he knew as Kalaus called out from his left, glancing over to see the usual furious look on his older brother's face, "What the hell were you thinking, going after that stray like it owed you money?!"

"...It was a loose end that needed to be tied up," Jushibert knew the weak excuse wasn't going to be enough to explain why, but he didn't need his brothers on his case about going after the woman.

Kalaus opened his mouth to further berate the younger brother before a hand clamped down on his shoulder, drawing his attention up to the cold, calculating expression of the eldest brother. The look on his face silenced the room.

"Jushibert," The sound of his name made the fifth brother flinch a little, not knowing what to expect next, "The stray was not the issue here. I only want to know why you stayed behind to follow an innocent human home."

He finally gave in after spending a long moment thinking of another excuse, "I had a feeling that something bad would happen to her. It was weird...like the instinct just settled deep in my chest and wouldn't let me forget about it."

"Is that why you shifted in the middle of the street?" Osowald asked another question, giving Jushibert whatever time he needed to answer.

"...yes. I became so mad at the stray that...it had tried to claim her as its own, and the thought drove me insane," The fifth brother lifted his hands over his eyes, feeling the IV line move with his right forearm, "I don't know what came over me!"

"The human you tried to save is dead."

Jushibert picked his head up suddenly at the words, his silver eyes wide in disbelief as the eldest regarded him with a calm look of recognition, "...what...?"

"The human you tried to save...is

dead

."

His heart protested the news, his mind screaming out that it couldn't be true. Jushibert had seen Itidor save her; he had made

sure

that he freed her before the stray could kill her! Thick tears pooled in the corners of his eyes, surprising himself and the others standing around his bed as he gingerly reached up to touch them while they rolled down his cheeks.

"That's...not true...You're lying..." The words seemed hesitant to be said, as if they doubted themselves before he could speak them. Jushibert continued to stare at his damp fingertips, confusion bubbling up in his gut.

Why did he doubt his oldest brother? Osowald had never stated anything that wasn't true before, so why would he lie about this? Why was Jushibert feeling so

affected

by the news of some human's death? Yes, she was nice to listen to, but...why had he stayed after the rest of the family left? Why did he try to wait by the front door to escort her home?

Why did he come to her rescue?

Osowald gently sat on the bed, propping a foot up on the opposing knee as he faced the younger brother, "It doesn't feel too good, does it?"

"I...don't understand why."

"Sweet lord..." Kalaus's face switched from anger to realization, looking down at Osowald before glazing at Itidor who was standing on the opposite side of the bed.

"I believe that you found someone that you can connect to, Jushibert," Osowald's voice softened as his expression mirrored the change, "She's not dead. The woman you saved is in the hospital being treated for a slight concussion and she should be released tomorrow morning."

Jushibert's heart leapt with joy at the news, confusion pressing further into his mind at why he was reacting this way.

"I don't know how to say it any simpler, dummy," The eldest reached out and lay a hand on Jushibert's head, ruffling his hair a little, "(Y/n)'s your mate."

"But...we don't know each other! How can that be?" The younger brother looked up to the eldest as a mixture of emotions raced across his face, "If I

say anything, she'll probably turn me down or move away!"

"Then start simple. Offer her an apology and explain that you took care of the problem from tonight," Osowald's familiar smirk spread across his lips, "If she's still talking to you by the end of the conversation, tell her that you'd like to see her again. Her response will tell you everything you need to know."

Jushibert returned late the next day, his smile more radiant than ever. When Itidor had asked what happened with the woman, the only answer he got was a simple "she asked me to attend her next performance".

Jyushimatsu and Naga!Reader

(Habu,

Protobothrops flavoviridis).

Length: up to 8 feet.

Habitats: Restricted to the Japanese Ryukyu Islands, including Okinawa and the Amami Islands. It is common on the larger islands, but not present on the smaller islands.

The venom of this species is of high toxicity, containing cytotoxin and hemorrhagic components, yet the fatality rate is less than 1%. A bite from a habu snake can cause nausea, vomiting, hypotension, and possibly death.

The smoke made it hard to breathe, his lungs screaming for fresh air as he stumbled through the forest line blinded by the thick curling black smoke that was belched out by the fires burning the greenery around him. Fighting against his body trying to shut down from the smoke inhalation, he stumbled to the ground and groaned as he struggled to suck down some form of fresh air.

The slippers had fallen from his feet a while ago, his white socks now stained with the dirt and ash that had settled onto the ground and the long sleeves of his hoodie had been pulled up along his forearms so they didn't sway into any open flame. Taking in as deep of a breath as he could, the usual smile turned into a pained grimace as the man crawled along the ground, his dark hues catching the dancing fire within the area to his right as it consumed everything in its path.

He had heard the tests, had been told by the locals of Okinawa that he needed to be careful along with his brothers...but he had laughed off the warning like he always did, encouraging the band of brothers to find a place

in the woods to camp for the night. Surely the locals were overreacting, right?

Soot fell from the trees like rain, the temperature growing hotter and hotter as the man tried to crawl away from the wildfire. His right arm felt hot, his dark eyes slowly closing as bright orange flames danced along the wooded path next to him.

A pain along his right arm woke him from the comfortable sleep he had fallen into, finding himself in a low hanging cave, the light filtered in from outside as the sun exposed his full surroundings.

Groaning in pain as his body protested the movements, Jyushimatsu sat up gently and kept his head low to avoid bumping the ceiling, his gaze shifting about until he saw a snake curled up by the entrance. The coloring of the snake gave him pause, the sunlight exposing the yellowish scales and dark brown markings that created swirled patterns on its back and sides. He couldn't see its head, but he didn't need to.

It was a habu, a snake native to Okinawa and its neighboring islands.

How he got into its cave, he suddenly didn't care. He needed to get out before the snake realized that he was there in the first place.

Glancing around, Jyushimatsu's heart began to race as he found no other exit out of the area other than where the habu was currently sleeping.

"C'mon, Jyushimatsu...think..." His quiet words sounded loud in the short echo of the cave, stilling to see if the snake would react at all.

Nothing.

Jyushimatsu carefully crawled to his knees and moved slowly towards the entrance, lifting his hands and feet higher as he came closer to the creature while ensuring that his sleeves were pulled up tightly. The snake's length was long enough to loop across the cave entrance a few times, seemingly

double his own height while remaining slim enough to probably climb the trees nearby.

He slowly inched over the sleeping serpent, its head curled away underneath some coils as the brightly colored scales bore the damage of some burns. Jyushimatsu paused as his gaze fell upon its wounds, recognizing that they were only on one side, as if the snake was bearing the brunt of the blaze while protecting its cave.

Was the snake trying to protect him?

Settling his right foot on the ground and standing up fully in the clearing, Jyushimatsu looked around the area to realize that the entire area had been engulfed in flames. Trees that once stood tall and bore their green leaves proudly now stood naked, their bark charred and flaking away. The grass that had been underneath Jyushimatsu's feet was no longer alive, turned to ash, the earth cracked and dried beneath his socks.

"Shoot...I gotta find it some help..." Jyushimatsu looked back at the habu snake, his mind screaming for him to run from the venomous creature while a small rational part of his brain was demanding for him to help the snake that had potentially saved his life. He had no clue how to hold a regular snake properly, let alone a venomous one. He'd never been interested in the animal before, but he had been told by many documentaries that if he could control the head then he'd have control of the body.

The problem was that the habu's head was tucked underneath its own body, the scales flaking off and peeling prematurely due to the extreme heat of the fire that had swept through the area, revealing the fleshy pink color underneath the scales that were forced to shed.

He didn't know where it was safe to touch the snake, but held his breath as his hands lowered onto the tail. The habu didn't even flinch when his fingers brushed against its scales, making his eyes widen in realization as he cautiously pulled the tail away from the rest of its coils. A soft creaking of scales sounded as the snake's skin was forced to move into new positions due to the external movements.

"Oh, no..." Jyushimatsu bit his bottom lip as he finally lifted off the coil keeping the head hidden from view, "Come on, buddy...don't be dead..."

What he saw made him freeze in place.

Instead of the reptilian head that he was expecting, Jyushimatsu saw the top half of a human. The torso was small enough to fit in the palm of his hand, the sight making him drop the snake's body in shock as his eyes drank in the sight of the monster laying before him.

The human half was partially covered in the same scales that adorned its snake body, crisscrossing over its clearly feminine chest and running down its humanoid arms before disappearing underneath the skin near its forearms. The scales reemerged close to its waist, blending in seamlessly with the scales along its tail. Its hair was long, hanging down to around its waist and colored the same as its scales, the dark brown pattern continuing throughout its hair that seemed to create a simulated vision of a regular serpentine head.

"What the fuck?!" Jyushimatsu took several steps back, holding his breath to see what its reaction would be. When it didn't move from the harsh drop, he carefully moved back to it, his right index finger reaching out and brushing aside its hair to reveal a face that bore scars and burns from the fire, "Shit...what to do...?"

His lips pursed in frustration as he grabbed the creature's torso and body, picking it up and looking around the area to figure out where he should go for help. This thing needed his help, whether it saved him or not, and he didn't want a guilty conscience haunting him the rest of his life for something like this.

"...Jyushimatsu...!"

A faint yell of his name drew his scattered attention to his left, panic fighting against fear and sanity as he began to run towards the sound of his name.

"Big brother Jyushimatsu, where are you?!" Another yell from someone else confirmed that he was headed in the right direction, his ears picking up the subtle whine of his youngest sextuplet brother before a third more powerful voice shouted out.

"Jyushi--!"

Tears began to prick at the corners of Jyushimatsu's eyes as he stumbled over some burnt tree roots, gathering his feet underneath him before he could fall over and risk waking up the venomous reptile held firm in his hands.

Dashing through the lively green treeline, Jyushimatsu didn't stop running until a pair of hands caught his shoulders and dragged him in a wide circle as the momentum slowed, forcing the fearful sextuplet to stop. His dark gaze caught the worried look of an identical man in a purple hoodie, their eyes quickly glancing over every change of the younger brother before locking onto the long yellowed rope between them.

"Jyushimatsu, what--"

"We need to help it, big brother!" Jyushimatsu's voice was rough, drawing a cough from him as he fought for a breath of clean air, "It saved me, and I want to help it back!"

"But that's--"

"--a habu! Drop it!" Someone grabbed his left wrist tightly, trying to pry the snake out of his hands.

"No, don't! She's hurt!" Jyushimatsu wrenched his arms away from the brother, seeing a confused look settle on the blue hooded brother, "Karamatsu, just let me help her and I'll put her back!"

"'She'? How do you know its sex?" Another identical face lowered towards the habu, a pointed frown resting on his lips as the green colored hoodie covered his torso. He squinted his eyes for a moment before yelling out in shock, his eyes wide as he took several steps back, "It's a monster!"

Jyushimatsu brought the snake close to his chest in defiance, his lips tugging into a frown, "Maybe, but she still saved me!"

"But, Jyushi--"

"Big brother Osomatsu, please," Jyushimatsu's tone dipped into sorrow, "I think this snake brought me to a cave and kept me safe through the fire...if I don't do something to save its life in return, then I'd be lower than a piece of shit."

The eldest sextuplet paused in his protest, closing his mouth as he looked at the other four in the gathering before moving his gaze to the limp snake held in Jyushimatsu's hands.

"Todomatsu, look up any information you can about treating burns on a snake and find stores that carry the supplies we'll need. Ichimatsu, help Jyushimatsu with carrying it and make sure that it doesn't struggle if it wakes up before we get to the hotel," He took a breath before looking at the remaining two, "Choromatsu and Karamatsu, find what information you can about feeding and keeping a snake, but don't buy anything that we don't need for its stay."

The brothers scattered to complete the tasks they were given, leaving Osomatsu with Jyushimatsu and Ichimatsu to help keep the snake hidden from prying eyes as he took off his red hoodie and laid it across the snake before walking in front of the other two.

Keeping to the smaller streets, the trio made their way back to the hotel that they were scheduled to stay at for another few weeks, quietly walking through the lobby and up the staircase before stopping at one of their rented rooms. Osomatsu reached into Jyushimatsu's shorts pocket and pulled out a thin wallet, digging out a keycard and inserting it into the slot before the door lock made a small beep. Opening the door wide so they could all get through, Osomatsu directed the brothers to lay the snake on one of the twin beds as he grabbed a handful of ice that was partially melted, throwing it into a washcloth to create a crude icepack.

"Careful..." Jyushimatsu barely muttered as he and Ichimatsu removed the hoodie from over the snake when it had been laid on the bed, revealing the snake in its entirety.

The damage he had seen at the cave was awful to look at, the peeling skin hard to see. How the snake was still breathing after what happened was a miracle, but he didn't want to count his blessings just yet.

"So...it's a snake with a human torso for a head?" Ichimatsu's dark voice brought him out of his thoughts, focusing on the older brother leaning close to see the small torso of a human splayed out on the sheets. Her arms lay on either side of her while her head was facing the window, the eyes shut, "Doesn't that make it a monster of sorts?"

"I've watched some stuff with this kind of creature...a naga, I think? But they're portrayed to be just as large as us," Osomatsu carefully moved to the side of the bed, still holding the makeshift icepack.

"That's a terrifying thought...imagine if she was our size," Jyushimatsu laughed a little, "She'd be...at least seven meters long."

The three brothers shuddered as one, imagining the tail draped all around the room as the feminine torso lay on the bed.

"That's one dangerous naga," Osomatsu huffed in disbelief, "Regardless, we need to wait to see what the others bring back. If it wakes up before then, we'd better hope that it's smart enough to understand Japanese."

"We need to soak it!" Todomatsu burst through the door to Jyushimatsu's shared room, instantly quieting when he received five glares that held a deeper warning, "Sorry...I've got the stuff we need. Is it awake?"

"Not yet," Jyushimatsu dropped his glare as he looked back at the large plastic container barely filled with shredded coconut bedding, the naga carefully laid out, "What do we need to soak her in?"

"Something called 'povidone-iodine'. The instructions are to mix it into water for a 30-minute soak every day until the burn is healed," Todomatsu held up a plastic bottle filled with dark brown liquid, rolling it in his hands to find instructions, "'Fill the bath pan half full with water that is warm to the touch. Measure out 5 to 10 ml povidone-iodine from the bottle'. Sounds easy enough."

"I'll get the bath running," Choromatsu stood up from the chair he had been in, letting Todomatsu steal his seat as he moved to the bathroom.

"Do you think we'll be able to fix her before we leave for home?" Jyushimatsu looked at his two older brothers, catching the exchanged looks between them before shifting his gaze back down to the still-asleep naga in the open container that Karamatsu and Choromatsu had bought.

"We can only try," Karamatsu responded after a moment of silence.

With Todomatsu carefully monitoring the water temperature, Jyushimatsu lifted the naga from her temporary home and carried her into the bathroom, kneeling next to the tub and slowly placing her in the water. A last minute change of heart prompted him to rest the naga's humanoid torso against his right hand while allowing the rest of her body to soak, forcing him to stay by the tub.

"Thirty minutes of this, then she goes back into the cage," Todomatsu scrolled through his phone before looking at the naga, raising the camera to take a few pictures.

"Why are you taking pictures..."

"Who wouldn't want to remember this? A real-life naga that my big brother found while on vacation," The youngest gave a soft laugh, "It'll make for a great story."

The soft digital click of the phone's camera sounded, letting a few moments of silence pass before the youngest brother hummed in disappointment, another shutter click sounding out before the hum turned into a frustrated grunt.

"That's weird..."

Jyushimatsu leaned over as far as his arm would allow, catching a glimpse of the phone screen and seeing his hand holding up a habu's head, "Does the camera not see it?"

"No, it doesn't..." The youngest sextuplet groaned as he took a few more pictures to confirm it, "It just shows you holding the head of a regular habu snake."

As Todomatsu was leaning over to show what he was talking about to Jyushimatsu, the older brother felt something squirming in his hand, flinching when a splash was heard in the tub. Both brothers looked over to see the snake swimming to the far corner of the tub, the serpentine movement drawing a cry from the youngest as he quickly backed away.

"What happened?!" Karamatsu was the first to respond, his presence at the door mere nanoseconds after the surprised shout, "Did someone get bit?"

"It's alive!" Todomatsu pointed towards the tub, drawing Karamatsu's focus to the black tea-colored water as he watched the creature move, "Now what do we do?!"

Jyushimatsu stayed silent as he watched the naga move around before it climbed out of the dyed water, its tiny hands reaching out for anything to grab onto as it slipped on the smooth tiled wall, falling back into the water and turning towards a different direction. The naga attempted to climb up the other corner of the back wall next to the tub, finding the same lack of purchase before turning around and pressing herself against the cool tiles when she saw three pairs of eyes staring right at her.

The staring contest was broken when Jyushimatsu slowly lowered his hand into the lukewarm water, splashing his fingers around a little to draw the naga's attention to the surface, "You can stay in the bath."

The naga quickly shifted her slitted golden eyes back to him, distrust written plainly on her face as the yellow coils began to gather underneath her.

"It's okay," His voice was quiet, trying to get the point across that she was safe where she was, "We're not going to hurt you."

There was no attempt from the naga to either communicate with the men or move from her chosen spot, Jyushimatsu's eyes catching the panicked breathing from the rapid rising of her chest.

"You saved me when I was in the forest, so I want to return the favor and help heal the burns that you got from protecting me," Jyushimatsu inched his fingers closer to the tip of her tail still in the water, his heart beating like crazy.

"I don't want your help. Let me go."

The feminine voice coming from the naga sent a shock through the three brothers in the bathroom, their eyes blinking in disbelief.

The naga glanced around her before trying to lift herself up to the built-in soapdish just above her head, reaching up as the bottommost coil slipped from the smooth lip of the tub, sending the naga back into the bathwater. Jyushimatsu panicked and grabbed at the tail of the naga, quickly lifting her out of the water as her coils shifted to cling to his arm.

"Jyushimatsu?!" Karamatsu cried out in shock as the younger stood up with the naga in his hands, the creature clinging to his fingers and forearm, "She can bite you!"

He cast a glance to the worried older brother, seeing the other three pressed in close at the doorway to watch what was happening before looking back at the naga. Jyushimatsu's hand was tightly gripping just underneath her waist, dangerously close to her face and well within strike range, but the shocked look on her features told him that she had no plans to do anything with her fangs just yet.

"I know that you're probably not used to this, but the weird bath is for your own health," Jyushimatsu slowly knelt down as her coils tightened around his hands and arm, drawing her attention back to him, "It's just for a little longer and then we have a place for you to rest comfortably."

"Just...let me go," The naga's voice was tight, either from frustration or fear, but the demand hadn't changed.

"We don't have intentions on keeping you, we promise."

She looked back to the bathwater as Jyushimatsu lowered her to it, stopping short of letting her scales touch the water. Glancing back up at Jyushimatsu, the black slits widened a little before she gingerly released her hold on his thumb and index finger, lowering herself to the water and submerging. Jyushimatsu stayed completely still until her long tail had unravelled from his forearm, staying close to the side of the tub while she swam around the bottom.

Despite the burns that were scattered along her body, she appeared to be moving without much hindrance.

Todomatsu took several more pictures before leaving the bathroom, Karamatsu following after as he was asked to see what the youngest brother was going to show.

Jyushimatsu watched the naga carefully, seeing her brush her fingers through her hair underwater and combing out the tangles that had been created from both the fire and rough handling. Pulling up the long sleeve on his right arm, he slowly dipped it into the water and let his hand rest on the bottom of the tub, refraining from moving as the habu's tail curled around it and pressed against it as a foothold.

Noticing the change of terrain, the naga looked over to where she felt his hand before looking up at him through the water, lifting herself to the surface to take a breath.

"Do you...promise to release me after you feel satisfied?"

"What do you mean?" The question took Jyushimatsu by surprise, "Like I said earlier, I'm going to bring you back home when you're healed."

"These burns aren't much..." The naga lifted a length of tail that had a section of peeled skin, slowly running her hand around the open wound

before wincing and letting it sink underneath the water, "I mean, I've suffered worse."

"Worse than these burns?" He lifted an eyebrow in uncertainty, "I know that you're a habu snake, and somewhat of a delicacy here in Okinawa."

"If I could swim out to a different island, I would," She huffed a little, her throat tightening and emanating a soft hiss, "You humans have hunted down many of my kind."

"I'm sorry that I trampled in your home."

"You didn't," Her voice softened a little, "I found you unconscious in the wildfire and dragged you back to my cave, trying to keep ahead of the wind the entire time. If you had been any heavier, I would've left you to the fire."

"Most of my weight is all muscle," Jyushimatsu gave a burst of laughter, "I'm very strong!"

"Not that it really matters," She ran her fingers through her wet hair once more, the dark brown patterns flaring out with the yellow hair, "It's not like I could do anything else to you."

"What do you mean?"

The naga didn't say anything else during the thirty-minute soak, Todomatsu's phone sounding an alarm before Jyushimatsu gently picked her up from the water and set her down in the plastic container that the brothers had hoped to keep her in for the stay. The youngest handed an ointment tube to Choromatsu and held up his phone with hopes of recording some proof, the third eldest sending a scalding glare to him before letting out a sigh of resignation.

Offering an apology and an explanation of what he wanted to do, Choromatsu opened the tube and began to apply the betadine ointment along the burns, flinching every time the naga took a breath.

When all of the burns were covered, Jyushimatsu moved the plastic lid over the container but didn't lock it, letting her know that the move was only meant to keep the heat in. If she didn't want to be in there, then she'd be allowed out when the ointment had been mostly absorbed.

A knock on the hotel door woke up Jyushimatsu and Todomatsu, both brothers stirring awake with Todomatsu heading towards the door to see who it was. Jyushimatsu glanced over at the plastic container to see the lid was ajar, his eyes widening as he tossed the bedsheet and comforter off of him, his gaze ferociously tearing apart the room to try and find where the naga had gone.

"...not that I know of," Todomatsu's voice picked up as the sounds of his bare feet shuffled back towards the beds, "I'm still alive, so it wasn't terrible."

Jyushimatsu quickly glanced towards the bed that Todomatsu had used, spotting some movement underneath the covers and pulled them off until he revealed the naga curling up in the warm spot that the youngest brother had left. Without uttering a word, he carefully pulled her from the bed and retreated into his own, knowing that Todomatsu would have an absolute fit if he found out that the naga had been sleeping with him.

"Well, I just wanted to alert you that our parents called and asked us to come back early from vacation," Choromatsu stepped into view as Jyushimatsu pulled the comforter over himself and the naga, feeling her curl around his leg.

"Early? How early are we talking about?" He raised an eyebrow at the change of plans.

"Tomorrow..."

"But that's--!"

"I

know

, Jyushimatsu," Choromatsu's brow furrowed in frustration, "I know that really cuts into our plans, but since they're the ones founding the trip, we can't really go against their word."

"What about the naga? What will happen to her?"

"We'll have to release her early," The third eldest's voice held a tone of defeat, "I know that you were looking forward to helping her as much as you could...but we no longer have that time."

"I'll be okay," The naga spoke from underneath the covers, prompting Jyushimatsu to lift them up and reveal her position curled around his left leg, "I do appreciate the effort that you all have made to help me, but I belong in the wild."

"But--" Jyushimatsu began to protest before she looked up at him.

"It's all right. This is how things should be."

"Then I'll come visit you next year!" He could feel the beginning signs of tears form at the corners of his eyes, "And the year after that!"

"I'd like that..." She gave a soft smile.

Jyushimatsu sighed heavily as he leaned against the shared bedroom wall, looking out the open window as a soft breeze caressed against his cheek.

"Thinking about something?" Ichimatsu briefly looked up from petting the stray cat on his lap, offering a dried sardine to the feline.

"Remember when we went to Okinawa and that naga saved me from the fire?"

"Oh..." The fourth eldest brother gave a grunt of recognition, "You mean what happened five years ago?"

"Yeah..." Jyushimatsu's eyes softened, "I wonder what happened to it..."

Jyushimatsu and Reader

"Oh, there you are."

A smile swept over my lips as I lifted my head to see the purple-clad brother standing idly by the entrance to the aquarium.

The purple hoodie was left unzipped while the hood was pulled over the dark purple baseball cap keeping his dark hair hidden from view, the thick letters sewn on to spell 'CAT' just above the bill. His face mask was pulled down to rest underneath his bottom lip, ready just in case we encountered some aerial irritants. The dark sweatpants covering his legs only bore a purple upside down paw print with the number '4' printed just underneath, his feet wearing purple and white sneakers.

A blush graced my face when I realized he was wearing the shirt that I had gifted his brothers as a set: blue and white horizontal stripes, each brother having one stripe dyed their signature color.

"Ichimatsu, you look really nice," I partially hid the blush behind my hands as my palms pressed against my cheeks.

"Ah," The compliment seemed to throw him off, his hooded eyes widening a little before he glanced away, "...you're cute, too."

The yellow spring dress I wore was layered with a white short sleeve tee shirt underneath, the spaghetti straps a little too thin for my personal taste, while a comfortable pair of yellow strap sandals donned my feet.

"Thanks," I clutched at my purse in an effort to not act shy, "Shall we get our tickets?"

"Already bought them," Ichimatsu held up two tickets in his hand, tucking the other hand in a hoodie pocket, "Ready?"

I happily followed Ichimatsu's lead, watching the different aquatic life mind their own business while he guided me through the aquarium. His hand in mine was always firm, the odd display of physical touch seemingly out of character for Ichimatsu, but I didn't really mind it.

This date was supposed to be a benchmark for how comfortable we felt in a dating scenario.

I was more shocked that Ichimatsu was actually here, completely fearing that he'd run away like he had previously on the mock dates we made.

My eyes traveled from his shoulder to his hand around mine, a light smile dancing on my lips.

Maybe he was giving us a chance

.

"Oh, here we are!" The excited exclamation snapped my focus back up to Ichimatsu, seeing the slip of a wide grin on his lips, "You must be hungry after walking for a few hours. Want something?"

"...Sure," I offered a smile back, watching his expression carefully, "I can pay for the food since you covered my entry."

"If you're okay with that," Ichimatsu instantly lost his smile as it shrank into a closed-mouth grin, his head barely nodding at the offer. He released my hand as I moved towards one of the food shops, ordering for both of us and finding a table away from the growing crowd.

Ichimatsu slowly picked at the food, seemingly enjoying every bite. I had nearly finished mine by the time he ate half of his.

"Did I...get something wrong?"

His dark gaze widened in surprise, shaking his head instantly, "N-no, you didn't. It's just...I was wondering how the cats would react to being fed this."

"The cod? I'm not sure," My gaze switched to his food for a moment, "Maybe...maybe on the next date we can try giving them some?"

"Cod's good for cats, so I don't see a problem with it," He nodded, "...maybe next date."

The tone he spoke revealed volumes, my eyes partially closing as I lowered the last bite of my sandwich to the plate. Ichimatsu sounded unsure of his own words.

"You know..." I took in a staggered breath, holding back as much emotion as I could while fighting down the negative thought that dared rest on my mind, "I was actually scared that you wouldn't show up today...and I guess...in a way, you did."

Ichimatsu's eyes widened as he lowered the bite of cod from his mouth, his attention fixated on me, "...(y/n)?"

"Thanks for still showing up, Jyushimatsu."

A worried expression flooded 'Ichimatsu's' face, the food forgotten as he raised his hands towards me, "Please...please don't get the wrong idea, (y/n)! I'm sure he really wanted to come."

"It's okay, Jyushimatsu," I brushed away some fresh tears as I leaned back in the chair, "This wouldn't be the first time Ichimatsu hasn't shown up at a mock date. It hurts like hell, but...it's clear that he's not comfortable with the idea."

Jyushimatsu's lips pressed together in worry, his dark hues lowering from me to the table between us, "...when he asked me to take his place today, I refused at first. I know that you wouldn't do this without some serious thinking so I tried to convince him to come instead, but he was adamant about it. He just doesn't see you as someone he can be in a relationship with...none of us do."

The words stung more than I thought they would, hiding my face from him as my hair fell like a shield between us. My heart wrenched with pain, my

mind struggling to acknowledge that what Jyushimatsu said wasn't a mistake.

None

of the six brothers that I had grown up with...

none of them wanted me.

I guess it made sense in hindsight: Osomatsu was stand-offish, Karamatsu had brushed aside my mock date offer, Choromatsu simply froze in fear, and Todomatsu tried to get me to join his mixers so that I could meet

someone else

.

My left hand reached up and grasped the cloth over my heart tightly, "You're probably right...After all, you're all so amazing and so certain of yourselves that I...I'm pretty unacceptable next to that."

"(Y/n), I know you don't mean that," Jyushimatsu's voice came from next to me, his hand lightly pressing on my right shoulder, "We've known you for most of our lives and we think you're worth more than all of us combined. We can't give you what you want in a partner, so we don't want to entertain that opportunity. None of us have income, none of us are looking to further our position...we're all content with our lives and we know that it'll only drag you down."

He let silence fill the space between us for a moment as he licked his lips.

"The only reason why we'd think of you as more than a friend would only be because...you're a woman. It would be a superficial relationship that we would all suffer in."

I let out a dry huff of laughter, raising my hands up to my face to wipe away the tears that had fallen before pushing my hair out of my face. Jyushimatsu moved away a little when he realized I was composing myself, settling back into the seat across from me while I took deep breaths.

As much as I hated to admit it, Jyushimatsu was

right

. A relationship only built on gender was nothing more than a shallow façade that I would end up loathing.

I adored the sextuplet brothers as friends, but my heart was yearning for more.

They

only

wanted friendship from me.

I had to respect their wishes as a friend.

After we finished the remaining food, Jyushimatsu gently took my hand once more and led me down to the front lobby of the aquarium. Just when I thought he was going to bring me outside, he took a sharp turn into the gift shop and released my hand.

"Let's look through here."

"Are...you sure?" I sniffled a little, allowing confusion to rest on my face.

"Positive. Let's get each other a 'thank you' gift for today, since this was a mock date," He closed his eyes and adopted a very Todomatsu-like expression, lifting a finger up so as to make a point, "It would be very rude, otherwise."

"Okay, okay," I gave a light shove against his shoulder, Jyushimatsu letting the impersonation drop immediately with a wide smile, "I'll go find you a gift."

"And I'll find one for you. Meet you back at the doorway?"

"Sure," My lips turned upwards in a smile before he ducked into one of the many aisles the gift shop had, leaving me on my own as I began perusing their goods.

There were a few things that caught my eye, but one item stood out above the rest for what I knew of Jyushimatsu's tastes: a cap that resembled a shark biting the wearer's head, the dorsal fin sticking straight up towards the back of the cap. It was soft to the touch and fit my own head, which meant it would fit Jyushimatsu's.

I bought it without looking around for him, taking the paper bag and waiting near the aforementioned doorway as I distracted myself with my phone.

"Ready to trade?" A paper bag rustled near me, drawing my attention after a short ten-minute wait. Jyushimatsu wore his wide smile with ease as he offered his purchase. I gently took it while offering my own, both of us nodding together and opening the bags as one.

He let out a loud exclamation of surprise, digging into the bag and bringing out the shark hat. With a quick shove, Jyushimatsu threw back the purple hood covering his head and swapped the baseball cap with the shark hat before tugging it down completely over his hair, "Oh, (y/n), this is great! It's so warm and soft!"

"Well, I'm glad you like it, Jyushimatsu," His smile was infectious as I carefully opened my gifted bag, seeing a glint of metal at the bottom before reaching in. My fingers felt a cool leathery cord, pinching it between and lifting it up to expose a necklace. The black cord was soft despite the material while the silver clasping matched the small silver aquatic animal that I loved, "This is lovely, Jyushi."

The familiar nickname fell from my lips easily as I strung the necklace around my neck, fastening it comfortably and pressing the animal against my skin to still its swaying motion.

"It...looks good on you," Jyushimatsu held out his hand towards me, the purple cap now safely tucked into the paper bag. I hesitantly took it,

uncertain of what he wanted to do now.

I thought that the 'date' would be over, since everything had been revealed.

When I expected to take a right towards the exit, Jyushimatsu took a left back into the aquarium exhibits, his hand firm around mine. I could only follow as he forged his way past the more popular viewing windows, my mind recognizing where we were heading towards.

It was at the end of a dark hallway, within one of the deep sea exhibits. The round viewing window allowed visitors to easily see the motions of the moon jellyfish swarm as they mindlessly floated along the circular current, the movement enrapturing my attention as Jyushimatsu brought me to the bench closest to the exhibit.

I didn't even realize that I had sat down until my cheek touched his shoulder.

"There's no one here to see us, (y/n)," Jyushimatsu's voice was gentle, his hand barely caressing the top of my head, "Take as long as you need."

As if my body was waiting for his permission, tears filled my eyes while it became hard to breathe. The heartache I had been pushing down and out of my mind resurfaced with every quiet sob, my hands clinging to his borrowed hoodie before I pressed my face into his shoulder.

Jyushimatsu quietly hummed a wordless tune while his hand lowered from my head to my shoulders, only offering a hug that I immediately embraced.

The necklace from the failed 'date' was only worn when I would hang out with Jyushimatsu as a sign of thanks and remembrance for his steadfast shoulder.

I never had romantical thoughts of the brothers ever again.

Reaper!Jyushimatsu and Reader

(Inspired by 'The Mask Slips Away' performed by RED.)

He sat down in the quiet room with a heavy sigh, a hand lifting up to rub against his face before falling away as his dark gaze settled on the only other person in the room.

They were laying on a hospital bed, covered by a thin sheet while tubes of various sizes sprouted from their skin and throat. A soft beep repeated itself every so often as a gentle hiss sounded every forced breath.

Their name was (y/n).

They had come in months ago to recover from the common cold while undergoing radiotherapy.

He knew them well, but only through the patient files. Jyushimatsu had studied them relentlessly since they had come under his care after they slipped into a coma only a week into their treatment here. There was something about them that he wanted to figure out but could never quite put his finger on why.

He had served under a few aliases throughout the decades while this hospital remained in operation, helping those ready to move on and calming those unwilling. He had seen thousands leave peacefully and dozens more protest their demise.

But....(y/n) was different.

Jyushimatsu knew that they should be sent on, their body remaining alive by only the technical definition.

However, their family and the doctor in charge of their case was adamant about them resuscitating at any point, thus they stayed in the hospital.

His brow furrowed as he leaned forward in the chair, his hands folding against each other before being pressed into his lips.

While his patient's status wasn't bothering him, the deadline that he had agreed to with the

others

was. (Y/n)'s soul remained untouched while the set date came and went.

They remained alive.

Jyushimatsu knew the

others

were coming, knew that they'd be coming as soon as tonight.

"Tick, tock, little Jyushimatsu."

His dark eyes snapped up to the sudden presence of two other men standing on either side of (y/n)'s comatose form, the red and purple colors decorating the figures underneath the long black hoods and cloaks indicated which of the others had come. Jyushimatsu stood up, the appearance of the nurse uniform falling away to reveal a similar black hood resting low over his head while his arms became engulfed in black sleeves that trailed down to his knees, the nursing pants shredding apart as a yellow zippered romper took its place. Laced sandals stitched themselves over his feet while metal anklets fastened tight just above them, the metallic color spreading across the tattered cloak before shifting into large safety pins that pinned the loose flaps down across his chest.

Both newcomers wore a smirk on their lips as they nearly mirrored each other in posture.

The one in red spoke first, "We've been gracious enough to let this drag on for as long as it did. Do your job or we'll take over."

"No," Jyushimatsu's eyes took on an eerie green glow, the others' following suit as he lowered his head just enough to cast a deep shadow over his eyes.

The one donned in a red shirt narrowed his gaze while a frown pressed down on his lips, the green hues thinning dangerously, "You can't say 'no', Jyushimatsu."

"I am," He took a step forward, neither of the others flinching at the movement, "What can I trade for more time? Their family is--"

"None of our concern," The purple-clothed man growled, one of his hands reaching out towards (y/n). His fingers deftly picked up a small carving that had been nestled next to their pillows, lifting the object up and holding it towards Jyushimatsu, "Mortals should not have sway over our decisions, yet this one does. You hold it in high enough regard that you've

gifted

it something."

Jyushimatsu's eyes barely softened at the memory, carefully carving the bone into the shape of (y/n)'s favorite animal. It was the last day that they were awake...their birthday. His gaze darted back up to the other holding it.

"Put it back, Ichimatsu. It's theirs."

"That

you

gave them!" Ichimatsu shouted, his hand clenching tight around the carving.

"And?"

The question seemed to throw both newcomers off, their shoulders jolting back as if Jyushimatsu had physically hit them. Silence filled the room as they gathered themselves.

"You don't see a problem with keeping an unreaped soul around?" The one in red gave a sigh as he rested a hand on his hip.

"I

will

reap them when it's their time, but not before then, Osomatsu."

"Their time was months ago!"

Jyushimatsu's furious green gaze locked with Ichimatsu's glower, "Last checked,

I

was the Reaper of this hospital."

"This isn't about territory or the quality of your work, Jyushimatsu," Osomatsu rocked on his heels for a short moment before leaning over (y/n)'s bed, his glowing gaze casting a light on their face, "It's about why you

haven't

done your job for this soul."

Jyushimatsu held his breath, his fingers tense as he waited for either Reaper to make a move. His weapon could be summoned with a mere twitch of muscle.

"Is it because you sense that they're waking up?" Osomatsu's hand lifted from his pants pocket to the bed rail, "Is it a sense of indifference, that you want to see this play out naturally like you're not here?"

His fingers lowered towards (y/n)'s face, his index digit brushing aside some hair from their face before Osomatsu's green hues snapped up to Jyushimatsu.

"Or is it because you

fell in love

."

The accusation bristled against Jyushimatsu's skin, his eyes widening before clutching the hard bone handle of his saw-like scythe, rushing forward and swinging the large weapon down towards Osomatsu's bent form. The saw blade spun to life on the single axis, only connected to the ribcage brace that clamped down tightly on Jyushimatsu's right forearm by way of a radius and ulna bones as his hand wrapped around the vertical handle to ensure tight control of the weapon.

Ichimatsu didn't move to intercept the attack while Osomatsu laughed in satisfaction, the red Reaper jumping back as the saw blade sank deep into the floor, "Ah, so that's it."

Jyushimatsu pressed forward, yanking the sawblade from the ground and swinging it in a wide arch where he guessed Osomatsu was going to land.

Sparks flew as saw blade collided with traditional scythe blade, the red metal holding its own against the yellow metal while Osomatsu landed safely behind his weapon.

Jyushimatsu's eyes narrowed at the appearance of the weapon, a long shaft extending out from Osomatsu's hands towards a large human skull with its jaw locked open. The scythe blade jutted out from between its maw, almost as if the skull was trying to swallow the blade backwards.

"You want to trade for more time? You have nothing to offer that we can't get."

"My gathered souls."

The two others stilled, Osomatsu losing most of his confident expression while Ichimatsu's lips barely opened in shock.

Jyushimatsu knew what he offered would be hard to decline. After all, a Reaper was reborn when they gathered a thousand souls for every sin they had committed before dying as a mortal. He knew the others were close...all six were within their last few thousand.

His gathered souls would ensure the other five would be reborn. Jyushimatsu would remain a Reaper to restart the process.

"But..." Ichimatsu failed to find the words for a moment, "You wouldn't--"

"

That

is how important (y/n) is to me," Jyushimatsu focused back on Osomatsu, the red Reaper's weapon now gone as his left hand lifted to curl around his chin, "

That's

what I'll trade for you and the others to leave them alone."

The hospital room fell silent once more for a long while, Osomatsu's glowing green hues fading back into their regular dark state.

"Keep them..." Osomatsu dropped his hands into his pants' pockets again, "I'll forget this happened, but I'm not lying to the others if they ask."

"They can try themselves."

Osomatsu only gave a slight nod before vanishing from sight, leaving Ichimatsu standing next to the bed.

"You're...not gonna do something stupid, are you?" His glowing hues faded to dark as he looked at Jyushimatsu, his clenched hand relaxing only slightly.

"I'm not going to blow my cover here. I

can't

do anything stupid," Jyushimatsu's lips partially lifted into a smile.

Ichimatsu only hummed before tossing something towards Jyushimatsu, his hands catching it while dropping his saw blade that faded into smoke.

"Good luck...little brother."

Jyushimatsu felt the animal carving rest in his hands, untouched by the other Reaper.

He quietly made his rounds in the ward, marking down any changes that had occurred since his last walk down the halls.

A cough caught his attention, drawing his focus to the room number before his eyes widened.

(Y/n)'s room.

Jyushimatsu opened the door wide to see the monitors connected to their form begin to spike, an invisible sign caught by modern instruments that the patient was showing signs of waking up. His breath caught in his throat before he staggered towards the bed, a hand quickly pressing a few buttons on his pager to summon the doctor on shift.

"...(y/n)...!" Jyushimatsu fought back tears of joy as their form began to move, quickly moving to gather the medication needed to calm them. As the injection emptied into their body through the main IV line, Jyushimatsu could only wait as the doctor arrived and began the procedure for a patient waking out of a coma.

He wanted to help (y/n) more than he could, his mind fervently praying that the seven months of their comatose state would leave their body relatively undamaged.

The doctor had done all he could, Jyushimatsu assisting in every way possible for the short-handed night shift.

With all preliminary checks finished and new measurements taken to make a new baseline for (y/n)'s charts, he left Jyushimatsu alone in the room to update the system with the new information.

The Reaper took in a deep breath as he watched the doctor leave, turning his attention to the waking patient.

What he wasn't expecting was to see them looking back at him.

"(Y/n), how are you feeling?" His job training kicked in, lightly taken aback by the sudden awareness, "You don't need to worry. You're safe in the hospital."

"...I know what you are, Reaper..." Their voice was rough, strained from being unused for months. The certainty in their eyes forced Jyushimatsu to drop the courteous attitude.

"...Then you are on the edge of death," He stood tall and walked to their bedside, reaching over and adjusting the pillows beneath their head into a more comfortable position, "What can this Reaper do for you?"

"How long...have you been here?"

His eyes hooded in memory, withdrawing his hands and sitting on the chair next to the hospital bed, leaning forward just a little, "Many years, but I've watched you since you were admitted while in a comatose state. I've been your ward, ensuring that your family's wishes were carried out. You probably don't feel like yourself...since you've suffered from an aneurysm while in deep sleep. We treated it as best as we could."

They took a slow breath, closing their eyes for a moment before reaching out their left hand, their fingers trembling with exertion. Jyushimatsu held their hand carefully in his, feeling how thin and frail they had become.

"I'm tired from fighting this..." His heart sank as they spoke the words, knowing the request that was often demanded of him would come soon, "Tell me about yourself, Reaper. I want to know about the one who tended to me."

"Well..." His lips lifted in a surprised smile, his eyes closing while a happy expression fell over his face, "My name is Jyushimatsu. I have five other brothers who are also Reapers, though they have different territories than mine. To be honest, I worried over you more than anyone else I've cared for..."

"Was I that much trouble?" Their brow creased a little in worry before Jyushimatsu furiously shook his head.

"No, not at all! Quite the opposite, really," He settled himself down, allowing his fingers to slip between theirs. (Y/n) didn't seem to notice or care about the more intimate physical contact, "I saw how much your family loves you, how much your doctor fought for your better health, so I became...intrigued. Curious. I wanted to know about this person that they care so much for."

(Y/n)'s heart rate monitor spiked a little, their face growing flush with red, "Please...I'm not anyone special."

"To them you are."

"Well, they're family," They laughed a little before it turned into a cough, Jyushimatsu quick to retrieve some water for them, "Thanks..."

(Y/n) slowly drank as much water as they could, laying their head back when they had enough. The Reaper refilled their cup and brought it back, just in case.

"Not everyone gets a chance to thank the people taking care of them in their final days..." They looked back at Jyushimatsu, their hand clasping his and intertwining their fingers, "I'm...very scared, Jyushimatsu."

"The process won't hurt. My weapon looks scary, but it does nothing to a soul," He flexed his wrist and produced the saw blade wheel, holding it next to him and allowing (y/n) to observe it.

"And here I was thinking that it would be a scythe."

"My oldest brother has a scythe. I opted for...dangerous."

"Somehow, it suits you," (Y/n)'s lips lifted in a smile before another coughing fit tore through their body. Jyushimatsu raised the water cup again.

Both of them remained silent as (y/n) regained their breath.

"What's it like on the other side?"

"I'm not sure. I haven't technically died yet."

"Well, what do you imagine it to be like?"

Jyushimatsu straightened in the seat, his hand tensing a little on theirs before relaxing again, "I imagine that it's peaceful, that whatever pain you're feeling just disappears like fog on a sunny day. Since how you behave in this life helps dictate how you'll live in the next one, your soul will be born again into an appropriate circumstance. I...can't really say how long of a wait it'll be, though. Hopefully, instant."

"One more thing, Jyushimatsu...before this happens."

Jyushimatsu cast a soft look to them, reaching over to wipe away the tears that were forming in the corners of their eyes, "What is it, (y/n)?"

"Tell my family that I love them, and to not grieve for me too long."

An amused huff blew through his nostrils, "I'll pass on your last words."

Carefully, Jyushimatsu leaned down towards (y/n), his lips gently pressing against their forehead. Their hand fell limp in his as he tenderly urged their

soul up through the kiss, standing to his full height to hold their quivering chill spirit close.

"May we meet again in another life."

--Mature-- Omega!Jyushimatsu and Beta!Reader

WARNING! This is a mature chapter, and meant for an 18+ audience. If you're younger than that, I respectfully ask that you find something else to read.

If you're older than 18, you may continue at your own discretion.

This story contains sexual scenes (female to male).

In this story, Jyushimatsu and the reader are

NOT

mates or former sexual partners.

The day started like any other. Staggering down the staircase in almost single file, he and his five identical brothers sat down heavily at the table in the common room, mindlessly picking at the breakfast already set for them. Brushing their teeth while getting into a fight before dressing in their everyday clothes, each brother ventured off to do their own thing for the rest of the day.

Jyushimatsu had a different plan in mind from his normal routine, leaving his baseball equipment at home and bounding towards the apartment complex down the street. Pulling out the two keys needed to get to his destination, he could barely contain his excitement as he pushed the fifth floor button in the elevator after unlocking the secured main entrance, mentally urging the car to move faster than it was programmed to and swinging his arms back and forth impatiently when his silent demands didn't go through.

The elevator stopped on the fifth floor, the doors opening up to a long stretch of walkway that spanned the building length, with apartments lined on one side while providing a nice view of the neighborhood on the other. Taking out the other key from his shorts pocket, Jyushimatsu smiled as he neared the apartment at the end, swiftly pushing the key into the door lock and opening the door wide.

The scent hit him first, smelling the soft lavender aroma that gently mixed with some kind of mint and lilac. Closing and locking the door behind him, he kicked off his slippers and made his way through the multiroom apartment, almost rivaling the size of the first floor of his home. Passing the kitchen and common room, he stopped in front of a door that was tucked away in a small hall that only went a meter or so before stopping at a wall. The lilac scent was the strongest here, and he cautiously opened the door to reveal a small room that was nearly packed to the brim with pillows, blankets, quilts, and sheets.

Jyushimatsu gave a satisfied sigh as he exhaled, stepping into the room and jumping into the sea of material, pushing and curling the fabrics aside to make room for him until he was comfortable enough. He knew that he was never going to be completely happy with his 'nest' and would always want it in some different configuration the next day. Taking a large pillow in his arms, he rubbed his cheek against it until the fabric had absolutely soaked up his leather-and-lilac scent.

Only a day or two was left before he'd be staying here for the duration of his heat, safe within the room he had fully claimed as his in the private apartment.

"Jyushimatsu...? Did I hear you come in?" A tired-sounding voice called out from the little hall, drawing his attention towards the door. His eyes widened and his smile grew bigger as he quickly opened the door and almost tackled the speaker to the ground, hearing a woman grunt while he wrapped his arms around her torso, "Ah...so I did."

"Good morning, (y/n)!"

"It's almost two in the afternoon, Jyushimatsu," The colored hair barely caught the bit of light coming through the blackout curtains hanging in the common room and the room she had just come from, "You said that you'd be over earlier..."

"Got into a fight," He felt a hand lay on his head, her deft fingers combing through his fluffy dark hair as he nuzzled against the side of her neck. Yeah, he had bent down a little bit but he didn't care; she was just the right height for him, "Slept later than usual."

"Obviously," Another yawn tore through her word before she moaned, her eyes closed against the light of the sun trying to force its way into her dark home, "I'm gonna go back to bed...go ahead and do what you need to with your room."

"Already done. Can I sleep with you?"

"Whatever..."

Jyushimatsu grinned to himself. He loved it when she was in this tired state and he loved following her into bed. She'd probably yell at him about it when she was fully awake, but he couldn't resist holding her close and feeling her sleep against his chest.

(Y/n) would never know it, but she gave the best hugs in her sleep.

After ensuring that his nest was still how he wanted it at the moment, Jyushimatsu closed the door to his own little room before following (y/n) into hers and shutting the door behind him.

Everything about her bedroom was dark -- dark sheets, dark furniture, dark curtains meant to keep out the brightest sunlight. The perfect room for a night shift worker.

(Y/n) grunted as she settled back into the sheets, throwing them over herself and curling up into a position that reminded Jyushimatsu of his older brother, Ichimatsu. When she was fully settled, he slipped off his socks and sweatshirt while wiggling out of his shorts, leaving him in just his

underwear and white tank top undershirt. The bed was cold as he climbed in between the sheets and scooted over until her curved back was flush against his chest, gently pushing his arms around her and bringing (y/n) in close.

Despite having a full night's sleep only a few hours ago, Jyushimatsu closed his eyes as he took in the faint scent of lavender and mint, exhaustion covering his body like a blanket.

He woke up covered in sweat, his chest heaving like he had run a marathon. (Y/n) wasn't in his arms.

In fact, he wasn't even in her bed anymore. Jyushimatsu looked around to see that he was in his nest room, the door wide open with some noises coming from near the common area of the apartment.

Had his heat started early?

Jyushimatsu opened his mouth to call for (y/n), his mind starting to flood with a need to be around her...for her scent to be around him. A heated moan started before he closed his lips, pressing his hands over his mouth to stifle the pitiful sound.

"I'll be right there, Jyushimatsu! Hold on!" (Y/n) called out, her voice coming closer as her scent began to thicken in his nose. She appeared in the doorframe, looking a little frazzled but otherwise awake and aware of what was happening, "I've called Mrs. Matsuno and let her know you're staying here for a while, like usual. What do you need me to do?"

(Y/n) was unable to fully help him, but Jyushimatsu preferred her company over finding someone that was more suited to his second gender. She was a Beta while he was an Omega, a reveal that threw most of his brothers off-guard as they had placed bets on whether he'd be either an Alpha or a Beta. (Y/n) had been with him through thick and thin, staying with him in his family home when his unexpected first heat arrived to ward off the older Alphas from doing anything dumb. She quickly made arrangements for him to have a room to himself in her apartment, intentionally moving into a larger place that was still close to his family home so he didn't have to go very far when something unexpected happened.

He owed her so much yet she didn't want anything in return. So seeing her frazzled because of his heat made him a little sad, but the emotion was quickly smothered by a wave of want and need.

"Hold me..." Jyushimatsu whined as she stepped into his room, careful to not move around the blankets much as she lowered herself in front of him and wrapped her arms around his shoulders. The physical contact dragged a heated mewl from his lips, his hands clinging to her shirt as he brought her closer, panting into the crook of her neck as she lay next to him.

"I'm right here," Her breath danced across his ear, making his fingers dig more into her back as he tried to get as close as he could to her, "Just tell me what you need and I'll do it."

"I...c-can't ask it..." Jyushimatsu barely shook his head, his thoughts fighting against each other as his mind started fraying against the instinct that was becoming stronger. He wanted her to claim him, to pin him down and make him all her own...but the small bit of sanity he had left knew that he couldn't ask his best friend to do that, fighting against the rising tide of raw instinct and urges to settle this overwhelming feeling of

desire

.

"Then I'll just hold you," (Y/n)'s words were meant to comfort him, to put him at ease like they had at times before. But there was something strange about this heat cycle, something that was more intense than what he had previously experienced that nearly drove him to jump on her.

Screwing his eyes shut, Jyushimatsu stilled against her body as he felt the familiar heat begin to pool between his legs, the dull ache that began to make itself known more and more it wanted to be touched. Parting his lips with the intention to ask (y/n) to get him something to drink, his tongue darted out instead and pressed flat against her neck, her cool skin feeling good on the warm organ as she stiffened next to him. The small layer of sweat she had accumulated from rushing around tasted sweet to him, her lavender scent flooding his senses as Jyushimatsu opened his eyes.

(Y/n)'s face was tense as his fingers began kneading into her back, his tongue swiping over her jawline before he pulled himself away, realizing what he was doing. Releasing his hold on her, he completely turned away from (y/n).

"Jyushi...?"

"I'm sorry, (y/n)...I didn't realize it was th-this bad," Jyushimatsu was honest, his hands clinging to the front of his tank top in an effort to not do anything else. His nose picked up the scent of lilac and lavender within the blanket next to him, burying his face into it and practically smothering his body as he pulled it over himself.

(Y/n) was his best friend. He wasn't going to let this cycle ruin the friendship they had together.

"Jyushimatsu...it's okay," Her hand gently pressed against his back, the touch nearly setting his nethers on fire, "If I didn't want to help, I wouldn't be here. I can't give much back in response, but...use me as you need me."

"I don't want to

use

you..." He barely peeked over the wall of blanket between them, "I want you to be okay with it, too...I don't want to rape you."

That's what Jyushimatsu feared would happen, seeing it almost happen with others on the news because someone lost complete control. He may be out of control normally, but he didn't want that to happen during his cycle...not when a beautiful friend like (y/n) was constantly on the other side of it.

"It's...only considered 'rape' if it's not consensual," (Y/n)'s voice grew quiet, "I'll always...been willing if you need it."

Her words stilled his turbulent thoughts for a long moment, the pooling heat forgotten as Jyushimatsu looked at her and met her colored hues with his dark gaze. Here he was, someone that could help another person gain

enough confidence to have a close relationship, but never thought something like that would happen to him. The blanket shifted down between the two, and soon Jyushimatsu was reaching for (y/n), bringing her close once more.

"Are you sure...?"

"Yes."

Jyushimatsu pressed his mouth onto her neck, his tongue once more licking at her skin while his hands dug into the fabric of her shirt, revealing more of her back to the cool air of the nest room. She was still under his touch, letting him explore what he needed to as she simply held him close.

His fingers dipped underneath the waistline of her pajamas, his own actions startling him as (y/n) moaned into his ear, slightly pulling away from him before he realized what she was doing. Tucking her hair back with a hair tie, she looked down at Jyushimatsu as he lay underneath her, his eyes going wide as she gently lay a hand over the bulge swelling in the front of his underwear.

Jyushimatsu melted under her light touch, his Omega instincts satisfied that someone was finally doing something to him and he let his body fully relax as she put her other hand on his left front thigh. The hand snuck up through the leg hole and pulled at the waistband from the inside, tugging it down enough where the base of his shaft was exposed to the air but the member itself was still caught in the cloth being pulled down. A light fluttering kiss was placed where the skin formed around the base, a warm and wet thing sliding onto it as his underwear was pulled further down.

His pulsing member flexed free from the restraining waistband and (y/n) caught it with her other hand, still lavishing attention on the center of his nerves. Jyushimatsu put both of his hands over his face when he realized exactly how slick he was, feeling the wetness grow as the cool air caressed his lower cheeks. (Y/n)'s mouth pulled away for a brief moment before he sucked in a breath through his teeth, feeling one of her hands wrap around his penis while the other trailed

lower

, her fingers slowly exploring the gap between his seed sack and his converted entrance.

Before he could tell her to stop, Jyushimatsu threw his head back into the pillows and blanket surrounding him, his eyes nearly rolling to the back of his head as he felt her tongue completely encompass his length. Her lithe fingers tightened into a grip near the bottom before she pulled her mouth away, pressing the strong muscle against the bottom of his shaft and setting the bundle of nerves on fire.

He was at a loss for words, partially wondering how she knew what to do when this was both of their first times embracing like this, ultimately not caring and just letting the waves of pleasure crash over him. Jyushimatsu gasped as a cold index finger slowly prodded at his slick entrance, his back slightly arching and his legs instinctively widening to let her have more access. As (y/n) used her mouth on his shaft, she teased open his hole with the other hand, casting occasional glances up at him to make sure that she was doing the right thing without hurting him.

"(Y/n)...oh my god...b-boeh...!" Random words spilled from Jyushimatsu's mouth between his gasps and cries of pleasure, wondering just how much he was missing out when he had only used his hands and shared toys with Ichimatsu. A second finger joined in teasing his entrance, colors bursting in his head as they worked in tandem to widen the entrance a little bit more while (y/n) continued to use her mouth on his dick. His hands reached above his head and entangled themselves in the blankets, his waist starting to move with her mouth while her fingers offset the rhythm to plunge deeper into him.

If this was a heat was supposed to feel like when it was being fulfilled, then what the fuck had he been doing

wrong

for the previous few years?!

Jyushimatsu gritted his teeth as his lips pulled back into a satisfied grin, catching (y/n)'s eye and visually begging for more. She responded by completely lowering her mouth over his entire length, and he pushed up with his waist, feeling something hit the tip before a vibration overrode his sense. (Y/n) hummed for a short moment before pulling up for air, her other hand still entertaining his more sensitive half before a third digit joined the other two.

He cried out wordlessly as (y/n) set back down on him, working his entire length with her mouth while riding out his desperate thrusts. Jyushimatsu wanted her to feel this good, too, but her entire body was out of reach.

Jyushimatsu let go of the blanket and twisted his fingers into her semi-loose hair, making her head move faster while she quickly met the new speed with her fingers, pumping in and out of his slick entrance while her mouth continued its assault. His mind almost went blank before giving a few harsh thrusts while locking his arms into position, forcing (y/n)'s head to stay in one place. She changed the angle her fingers were at and he screamed out in ecstasy, feeling the orgasmic tidal wave crash over his mind and nerves, locking up his muscles as his member throbbed before unleashing its load while his wet entrance became more slick as it expected an Alpha's knot locking inside. Just before he could cry out in disappointment, another burst of movement had him cresting on another orgasm, feeling something suddenly swell in size inside of his hole.

Another jerk from his body sent more fluids splashing onto (y/n) and his hands fell away from her head to free her from the forced position. Jyushimatsu wordlessly cried out as yet another wave of pleasure crashed down on him, his body spasming into a curled position that yanked the object from his slick hole and completely freed him from whatever it was.

Exhaustion quickly filled the void that ecstasy left, his hands weakly grabbing the blanket and wrapping up in it.

Jyushimatsu didn't know what time it was when he woke up, but his overwhelming scent was the only one in the room. He couldn't smell (y/n)'s lavender and mint mixture like he was usually able to, but he couldn't move from where he was as his body cried out for rest. Shifting his legs beneath

him, he gasped as a soreness made itself prevalent, instinctively reaching down to lay a hand on the bruised muscle. There was still a layer of slick that hadn't fully dried from his orgasm, which meant he hadn't been out for a long time.

Slowly looking over to find that his clothes had been taken from him, Jyushimatsu resolved to crawl on his knees towards the door, using the doorframe as a crutch to stand up.

"...(y/n)?" He called out into the apartment, hearing some noise in the bathroom. Moving closer, he slightly pushed the ajar door open to see (y/n) coughing and blowing out her nose before she turned to see him in the doorway.

"Jyushimatsu, you're awake? I was expecting you to sleep the rest of the day," She quickly threw out the used tissues and moved aside to show a freshly drawn tub, "I was about to use it, but you need it more than I do."

"Are you okay?" He clung to the door jamb like a lifeline as he felt a knee buckle underneath his weight, "I didn't get you sick, did I?"

Her face flushed before she shook it, "No, nothing of the sort. Just...got something caught in the back of my throat and was trying to get it out. I've got the laundry started, so take your time."

As (y/n) walked by, Jyushimatsu reached out and grabbed her forearm. She looked over at him in surprise.

"We're...still friends, right?"

"Of course," She gave him a bright smile, her words certain, "What we did doesn't change how I think of you."

A sense of relief fell over him like a thick coat, soothing his quiet anxieties about their relationship changing because of what he practically forced her to do near the end. He released her forearm and entered the bathroom, intending on taking his time washing up and soaking the soreness away.

After scrubbing up and rinsing off multiple times, Jyushimatsu cast a glance towards the closed bathroom door as he sank into the drawn tub.

Maybe he'd ask her if they wanted to progress their relationship to something more...intimate before his next heat cycle...

FujioRock!Todomatsu x Idol!Reader

(Warning: There will be mentions of identity crises, depressive episodes, and panic attacks. Please take caution and do not read if you are uncomfortable with these issues. If you are feeling any onset of these conditions, please close this chapter and seek help. I do not wish to trigger any kind of negative reaction in you.)

(The Matsuno brothers are

not

related to each other in this one-shot.)

Breathe in, belt out the song, breathe in again. Repeat until the concert is over, then greet fans with a cheerful tone and happy smile until the apartment door closes.

Breathe in, put the razor blade down, breathe out. Answer the questioning phone call from him, apologize for being tired, and promise to not miss the next date.

I stared up at the blank ceiling, feeling empty inside once more as the sun set on another chaotic day. My manager, Hideo, was getting more and more pushy about public appearances, finding ways to squeeze as many publicity stunts as he possibly could into a single day to boost

her

popularity. My eyebrow twitched in anger as the roaring crowd echoed in my ears.

'

Crystyl!...Crystyl!...Crystyl!'

I turned over in my bed, clamping my hands over my ears to shut out the voices screaming

her

name. After a few futile moments, I leapt out of the bed and staggered towards the stereo on the other side of the room, quickly turning it on and hitting the 'play' button to silence the ringing in my head.

The cry of an electric violin instantly quieted the chanting, building in volume as I closed my eyes to listen. The stringed instrument had changed tempo as an electric guitar joined it, the bass drum sounding out the beat before the drummer hit the snare and picked up the song as the other instruments joined in. It was a few more measures before the singing started, the rock sound washing over me.

I had only seen the band once in concert, right before my manager became super strict about Crystyl's appearance. It was an unlikely combination of instruments, but they made it really work. The stage performance they gave was astounding; fire shows that never seemed to bother them as the six band members played their hearts out for the crowd, impressive wire acrobatics that the audience couldn't get enough of, the lights that always seemed to be perfectly timed.

I had managed to grab a seat near the back of the amphitheater, but I was able to see and hear everything. The concert was partially postponed from a few days before, and I was excited when the concert was rescheduled to a day that I didn't have anything planned. When I had told my partner, he smiled and voiced his thankfulness at my chance to see them live. He had been to quite a few of their concerts and gave up his seat so I could see them once.

I opened my eyes and looked back at my inactive flip phone sitting near my bed, my heart sinking to my stomach as I remembered brushing him off tonight. Without giving it another thought, I turned down the music and dialed his number by heart, waiting patiently as the ring tone sounded.

"(Y/n)?"

"Totty...I'm sorry about tonight," I could hear how tired he was over the phone, hanging my head low as I sighed, "I should've called you earlier to let you know, but..."

"No worries, (y/n)," His voice perked up on the other side of the call, "I've had rough days, too. Go get some rest and we can try again at a later time, all right?"

"But, this is the fourth time I've done this to you. It's not okay, Totty."

"I've had to cancel dates on you due to a change in plans with my work, so I'm not holding this against you. Ever," The finality of the last word shut my mouth, "We're both busy adults with jobs. This kind of thing happens every so often. We just gotta work it out and move on to tomorrow with our heads high."

"---" I heard a few other voices pick up, but unable to make out the words they were saying.

"Ah, shit...The guys are getting into trouble, so I better wrangle them in," Totty sighed heavily with a groan. I could picture him pinching his eyebrows together in frustration, "Listen, sweetie, I'll talk with you later."

"Before you go, I'd like our next date to be a Fujio Rock concert," I quickly stated before he could hang up. I could hear him catch his breath before a sharp laugh sounded in the background, drowning out in distant conversation.

"Yeah, I'd like that, too. Go rest, (y/n)."

After the goodbyes, Totty hung up the call. I pulled the phone away from my ear as the keyboard finished up its solo in the song, the lead singer cutting in and yelling out the chorus one more time. Plugging in the phone to charge, I climbed into my bed and let the CD run its course, falling asleep as I went back to the concert in my dreams.

The makeup artist and hairdresser fussed over me, stabbing pins into my hair to keep the wig in place as my eyelids were pulled to curl the lashes just right so the extensions would fit perfectly. I held on tightly to the sides of the chair, bearing with the beating for the photo op and wishing that my manager would just

ask

me what I wanted to do.

But I wasn't forced to sign the dotted line of the contract.

"--after the photo op is a meet-and-greet with a select number of fans to support charity, followed by practice for next week's concert in Tokyo," My manager droned on, rifling through a schedule book flooded with tabs and sticky notes.

"Tokyo?" I couldn't raise an eyebrow in confusion.

"You'll be the opening performance for Fujio Rock."

My heart leapt into my throat, "H-how did you manage that?"

"They were looking for a smaller artist to help promote, and your most recent track was picked from the selection" He carried on as if this happened every day.

I was opening for Fujio Rock?!

My eyes slightly closed,

No,

Crystyl

was opening for Fujio Rock.

"Crystyl, are you ready yet?" A knock sounded from the door.

"Just another minute for the outfit," Hideo responded as a zipper was pulled up my back. I glanced over at the large dressing room mirrors to see myself in a blue dress, the sleeves loose and lacy as the body of the dress held an Oriental design. With a small nudge from the makeup team, I was led out of the dressing room and onto the photo studio, stepping onto a large pastel green backdrop and handed a paper umbrella to pose with.

With a nod from the lead photographer, I began to pose in various ways and used the umbrella to the best of my ability with little direction from the lead photographer. Keeping a small smile on my face, my mind pulled from the little experience I had with photo shoots and didn't seem to do anything that the photographer didn't like.

Soon enough, I was pulled from the backdrop, stuffed into another summertime outfit, and given a different prop to pose with. Again and again until the lead called quitting time. I was ushered into the dressing room, pulled from the last outfit, and dressed in my street clothes while the heavy makeup was removed and followed up with light touch-ups for the meet-and-greet.

Stepping into a black car, I was driven to the next destination, stifling a growl from my stomach with a small laugh as the clock ticked past one.

"Here," A smile crossed Hideo's face as he pulled out a pack of lemon cream crackers, "We'll grab you something small after the fan greet, okay? Sorry that the photo op went longer than expected."

"Thanks," I nearly whispered as I took the crackers from him, eating them as quickly as I could without ruining the light lip gloss.

The car pulled into a VIP parking lot and the driver opened the door for us. Taking the hint, I tossed the wrapper into the trash bin nearest to me and followed Hideo through the doors.

"The charity is for APFS, Asian People's Friendship Society, and they advocate for foreign residents' fundamental human rights. Everything that

the fans pay for is going directly to their funding; we're not getting a single cent of it."

"That's fine with me, as long as that's true," I nodded as he opened the double doors, a large conference room revealing itself as a large gathering of people cheered. Crystyl came out in full force, smiling and waving at everyone as people had their cellphones pulled out, snapping pictures and recording videos as I walked towards them. Various people shouted out their love for

her

, while others began to line up against the barrier to give me some space from the crowd.

The hired security guards barely needed to hold them back as everyone seemed to be much less rowdy than the hardcore fans, the ones that did everything they could just to try and grab Crystyl's hand to profess their undying love for her and the very air she breathed. I withheld a sigh of relief as I heard the event organizer shout out instructions.

The fans had already purchased their selected items, and were given a timed slot to take pictures with Crystyl. No inappropriate touching or vulgar body language was allowed, like usual.

Starting with the first person, Crystyl signed the various items they bought and took a few pictures with them, including her signature pose. After the pictures came the heartfelt thanks from the fan, followed by promises of seeing her in as many concerts as they could.

I had fun at the event. The people that were participating and organizing seemed like really decent people, just normal everyday humans that wanted to support a growing artist

and

a charity that helped society in Japan. The smiles became more heartfelt and honest as the event went on.

Crystyl

was always having fun no matter what. Her can-do attitude with a positive outlook always cheered up the crowd, professing her mass love to each and every person that came to her concerts, thanking them with a large smile on her face. The constant high-fives and hugs were her way of thanking people, pulling away after just the right amount of time for each hug to not be 'clingy', or pulling away immediately when the fan wasn't completely comfortable with the idea of physical touch. She always respected what the fans wanted, and usually gave it to them if it was something she was allowed to do.

"I'm so excited to hear you next week!" A male fan smiled down at me, his hands slightly sweaty from being nervous. His green-colored hair sparked a thought that I should be familiar with him, "You're gonna knock Fujio Rock outta the park."

"Oh, I don't think so," I caught myself before slipping back into Crystyl, "I mean, they're the main headliners, so just being able to open for them is a great honor! They've been in the game a lot longer than me, so I have a lot of hurdles to jump over to even consider 'knocking them out of the park'."

The fan's smile widened, "You're already pretty talented, Crystyl! You'll be fine."

I yelled at myself mentally, throwing myself more into Crystyl's mentality.

"You're right! I'll be able to do it!" Crystyl held out her hand for a high-five that the fan immediately reciprocated. I held onto that positivity for as long as I could, only releasing it when I heard the car door close after me, dropping my head into my hands and taking in a deep breath. I calmed down as much as I could before sitting up again, seeing that Hideo had already ordered food from some drive-thru, setting the bag down next to me.

"Just eat and relax. We're early for the practice, so the driver is taking a few laps around the city block."

I could tell from his eyes that he knew what almost happened, turning my eyes towards the bag and opening it to see a half sandwich and small salad, a bottle of water placed in the bag to keep both items upright. I ate the sandwich slowly, letting myself recover by the time I finished the small late lunch.

"You must be Crystyl," A fair looking woman extended her hand to me, slightly bowing as Hideo and I walked into the backstage area. I shook her hand with a smile.

"I am."

"The practice run through doesn't start for another twenty minutes, but go ahead and head to your dressing room to look through the outfits the team has picked out for you," She waved her arm towards the 'band-only' area, "Someone will come fetch you when the stage is ready to start."

"Sounds good," I nodded and followed the signs to my assigned dressing room for the duration of the practice and concert. From what I was told, the harder rehearsals would be in a few days before the three-day concert. The next three days would be for choreography and layout for the band, along with my individual practice and stage presentation. I took a deep breath as I rested a hand on the doorknob, twisting it and pushing the door open to reveal a man looking over the outfit rack, a hand against his chin.

"--don't really seem to fit much, but..." He stopped talking to himself as the door opened, looking over and moving his hand from his chin to his hip, "Crystyl, right?"

I froze for a millisecond before Crystyl's wide smile came back with a force, the green-colored hair snapping my focus for a moment to remember that he was the same fan that encouraged me earlier today...

"Jade! It's such a pleasure to finally meet you in person," I stepped towards the unexpected band member, extending my hand for a handshake.

The third member of the band was a little taller than me, his green hair left down and messy as it partially covered the green frosted tips on the right side of his head. Every fan knew of him as the rockstar violin player of Fujio Rock, one of the driving forces for ensuring that each concert went spectacularly. I should've guessed that Crystyl would've gotten a visit from him at some point to ensure that she didn't mess up her part as the opening act, but I didn't want it to be this soon.

"Same here," He quickly shook my hand and looked down towards me, the neutral expression set on his face unnerving me. It felt like he was staring at a hated insect instead of someone he would be working with, "I'm sure that this event will go smoothly."

"Did something trouble you about the costumes?" Crystyl diverted the subject, looking towards the handful of outfits that were hanging. Most of them were some shade of my favorite color, so I didn't see a problem with them.

"Not particularly, it's just that I don't want to make it seem like you're in favor of a band member more than the others," He looked back, reaching out and tugging on one of the outfits. I mentally lowered my eyes and head to look at the floor, but Crystyl slightly tilted her head to the side as she looked at the outfits with a thoughtful look on her face.

"Yeah, I can see what you're talking about. What color were you thinking of me wearing, then?" Her voice was curious.

"Most of the main spectrum is out since my band's wearing it," Jade let go of the garment, glancing back at me, "Will you be leaving your hair that color?"

"I don't think so. There was talk of putting a reverse black ombre color on my hair," Crystyl placed her right index finger on her chin, "Maybe something monocolored, then?"

"Probably a dark gray or black would work," He seemed to agree, "I'll go speak with the outfit designers and see if we can change your selection."

"Sounds good," Crystyl waved him farewell as he left the dressing room, closing the door as he went.

I lowered my arm and looked over sadly at the current selection, walking over and slowly going through them. They all looked beautiful to wear; each garment boasting enough sequins to catch the light and dazzle the audience while leaving a lot of plain fabric to spin around in. The shades looked great on me and looked like they'd fit my figure well, making me pull one off of the rack and hold it in front of my body. It looked great in the mirror, but if Jade wasn't pleased with it, then there was no chance I'd be able to wear it without making one of them upset.

Black.

That's what he wanted Crystyl to wear and Crystyl would oblige.

I sighed inwardly as I put the outfit back, pushing past the hurtful thoughts as I began to strip down to my dancing leggings, stretch out my body, and go through the motions for warming up my vocal chords.

"--four, five, six, seven, eight."

The dance instructor counted out as Crystyl followed the steps perfectly, mimicking the moves that the instructor had only acted out an hour ago. My history of contemporary and ballet lessons helped ease Crystyl into the motions, stopping the turns on a dime and walking with grace over the stage to certain points. I could feel multiple stares as the routine was repeated, ignoring the band helping out to roll out their equipment and begin their own setup.

"Great," The instructor had run Crystyl through several routines, redoing the ones that would fit the chosen songs over and over before moving onto a different set. I leaned forward and took in a deep breath, feeling the sweat soak into the practice clothes, my hair, and drip down my face. I'd need a sweatband for tomorrow's practice...

"Crystyl," Hideo called out from the right wing of the stage, drawing my attention as he walked out with a hand towel and bottle of water. A proud smile was planted on his face and Crystyl flashed one back in response, "You looked great out there. Take these and go sit for a moment."

"Oh, I can't. If I take a break now, then I'll need to stretch out again," I looked towards the dance instructor for confirmation, which I didn't receive, "I may need to keep practicing, but I'll definitely take the water and towel."

Gently taking the items from his hands, I pressed the towel against my face and neck, popping open the water bottle to drink a swing or two of cool water. The instructor walked over towards the band manager and someone else, the two talking to each other before letting the third join the conversation. Turning away, I began to cool off my body while doing intermittent stretches while the band was plugging everything in.

"Hey, (y/n)," Totty's voice sounded exhausted like it usually did after his work shift. I held the phone close to my ear as I pressed my bath towel against my damp hair.

"Totty...why the sudden call?" I left my bathroom and sat down on my bed, worry settling on my face at the unexpected phone call.

"The next concert date...I don't know if I can make it."

"Work...?" I tried to not sound disappointed.

"Yeah. Everything's getting busy here with business picking up," Totty sighed, sounding frustrated at himself, "I hate doing this to you."

"No worries," I tried to smile, "I've still got my ticket, so I'll try to sneak a recording of Fujio Rock that we can jam out to later."

"Could you try to get the opening singer, too? I heard that she's supposed to be really good for a small artist."

I flinched, biting the inside of my cheek to not make any noise. I'd have to ask one of the production crew to record Crystyl's part, "Yeah, for sure!"

"That sounds wonderful, (y/n). I can't wait to see it with you," Totty sighed with relief, "Just don't get caught by security, okay?"

"Promise."

"Hey, where's Crystyl?" Todo asked one of the stagehands, getting a look-around and a shrug as a reply. The past week had gone smoothly by all accounts, so it was odd to find their opener late or missing on the last day of rehearsal.

"Try the dressing rooms?" Jade called out as he played around with the fine tuners on his violin, finishing up some last touches before the final rehearsal started. Todo pursed his lips together, his eyebrows furrowing as he made his way backstage in his costume, pausing when he saw Hideo, Crystyl's manager stand guard outside her dressing room door.

"Is she ready to go?"

"Ah," Hideo cast a quick glance to the door, "No, not yet. Give her about ten more minutes. She...should be ready by then."

"'Should'?" Todo caught the odd wording.

"You know how amateur artists can be when the deadline for a concert is closing in. She just needs some more time to get...mentally prepared," He gave a smile, simply waving off the interest as he leaned against the door frame.

"If you're sure," Todo slightly frowned, wondering if Crystyl was going to be able to hold it together.

He found her constant smile almost unnerving, her face almost turning into a porcelain mask the more he looked at her throughout the week. If her fans

liked it, then there probably wasn't anything wrong with how she was acting.

He took out his cellphone as he turned away, quickly pressing in (y/n)'s number. If he had some spare time for the opener to get ready, then he was going to talk with his girlfriend to see how she was doing.

He paused midstride, the ringtone he knew so well playing out in a ten second loop loudly from within Crystyl's dressing room. Todo waited until the call went to voicemail before hanging up, redialing just in case. Maybe it was a coinc--

The same ringtone, the same timing with the dialing.

Her phone,

Crystyl's

phone, was registering his phone call...as 'Totty'.

Todo turned on his heel, quickly walking back towards the dressing room as his mind flooded with partial distress. He should've picked up the signs as the mental puzzle pieces fell into place: the same nervous ticks that disappeared behind the confident response of Crystyl, her favorite color being chosen initially for her wardrobe before being changed to black, the same physicality...

"Let me in," He nearly demanded from Hideo, shoving his phone into his back pocket.

"I-I can't."

"Please, I need to make sure she's all right," Todo pushed his partially dyed pink hair out of his face, his eyes pleading Hideo to be let in.

Hideo balked a little before turning away, letting Todo open the door.

"(Y/n)!" Todo called out as he opened the door, his eyes settling on a familiar disheveled form huddled underneath the makeup table. Her arms

were crossed across her knees with her hands tightly clenched onto the sleeves, her jewelry slightly shaking.

She was having a panic attack.

Quietly closing the door behind him, Todo took steps loud enough for her to hear before crawling underneath the table and gently bringing her into a hug, putting her damp face into the crook of his neck.

"I'm here...Tell me what you need."

"T-Totty...?" (Y/n)'s voice shook as her breathing escalated. He closed his eyes and took loud audible breaths, slow enough that she started to mimic him as the tense moment dragged on.

"You're doing good, sweetie."

"What are you doing here?" Her voice was less strained and a little more relaxed. He kept her in the same position, feeling her arms tremble less as time went on.

"I'm at work," He tried to not laugh at his own answer, "What are you doing here at my workplace?"

Todo smiled as (y/n) leaned more fully on him, her body not shaking as much anymore as the breathing helped her relax out of the panic attack.

"But...you're--"

"Yeah," He answered the unasked question, "It was supposed to be a surprise, but I kept getting cold feet about telling you."

He ran a hand through her hair, slowly rubbing her scalp as he kept her close. She took in a shuddering deep breath before looking up at him.

My mind wasn't still, but I could see Totty's features underneath the stage makeup and colored hair. I didn't know how to feel about it, so I didn't focus on it.

Another deep breath in, just feeling Totty's calm heartbeat against my chest was what I needed. I wanted to be safe, that I wasn't going to die or be left alone with the thoughts of letting the concert go awry, or that I was merely a host for Crystyl to act through.

I was still me, still (y/n) that had a loving boyfriend, still a human that wanted to be successful at something. I felt the dark thoughts creep back, that I'd never amount to much of anything...especially when

my boyfriend is more popular than I am!

Totty's arms shifted, bringing me closer like he sensed what I was thinking. Maybe he knew what was going through my mind.

"I'm so proud of you, (y/n)."

The softness of his voice shattered my drowning thoughts, bringing me right back to the immediate moment of us holding each other underneath the makeup table.

"Proud of me?"

"Of course. Always."

"I want to hear why you're proud of me," The words tumbled from my mouth. I needed to hear him talk, regardless of what.

"You kept such a big secret all on your own," Totty pulled away and rested his forehead against mine, looking into my eyes, "That takes a lot of willpower."

"I guess," I couldn't help but laugh a little, sniffing as I tried to breathe through my nose.

"Not just your actual work, but such a beautiful persona of who you are," He continued, his hands moving from my back and head to my cheeks, "You show everyone what I see in you, and I think that's wonderful."

I could only stare as I soaked in his words.

"You are, and will always be, beautiful to me."

Tears welled up in my eyes again, and I could only hold Totty close as I let out my sobs. I had heard the words from him before, but they packed more of a punch this time. His hand lifted off of my back for a brief moment before he placed it on my head, moving his fingers underneath my hair to rub against my scalp once more.

I don't know how long we stayed in the same position, but he finally let go when I moved to stand up on my own, helping him up from the floor. I apologized over the marks I left on his outfit's shoulder, wiping away my mess with tissues from my bag. He promised that it was fine before the costume team swept into the room and pushed him out, quickly helping me change my clothes.

The final rehearsal of the day went as well as every other one, except the other band members were a little more rough with Totty in their physical teasing throughout the mock performance. He rolled with their jabs and shoves, giving back whatever they dished out before the lights cut off, signaling the end of the 'concert'. When the coordinator was satisfied with everything she'd seen, she let us change out of the costumes and leave for the night with orders to not strain our voices and bodies more than necessary.

"Where are you going?" Totty's voice called out behind me as I felt a hand curl around my own. I turned to see his normal smiling face, the dyed pink hair tucked up and out of view underneath a bright pink newsboy cap. He was wearing a shirt that I had given him for Christmas a few years ago when we started dating, the pastel pink color complimented by black jeans and black shoes.

"Uh...back home?" I gave a nervous smile, thumbing the strap of my day bag. His grip tightened a little.

"Tell your manager that I'm taking care of you for the night."

"But...your fans--"

He instantly stepped in and held me close against him, silencing me with a deep kiss. There was nothing fake about the kiss, as if he wanted to show me what he felt at the moment.

"I owe you a date, now that you're free from work," Totty pulled back with a wink, taking the lead and bringing me to a different entrance that the stagehands had been using throughout the day. It led to an open alley with no foot traffic, no fans waiting to jump the departing band members.

"But--"

"I know a place that's open at this time of night," His hand remained on mine, gently pulling me out into the street and down towards the apartment we shared, "They deliver too, so there's no issue about being seen eating together in public."

"Deliver?" I narrowed both eyebrows in suspicion.

"Yeah, delivery. Not super glamorous, but I don't need it to be when I'm going to be showing you exactly what you mean to me tonight," Totty turned and made eye contact with me, his eyes holding a glint that made my heart skip a beat.

Mafia!Todomatsu and Reader

I waited patiently as the sunset sky began to darken from an orange to a deep blue color, a box of handmade chocolates tucked away safely in a bag hanging off my elbow as I pulled my phone from my purse.

7:13 pm. Almost two hours since the agreed meeting time.

I knew that he and his brothers were really busy and I had already sent a text to him for an updated time of arrival. There had been no response.

This wasn't the first time that he was this late to our date night. Heaving out a sigh, I sent another message to him before putting my phone away. I could just drop off the chocolates at their house and try again tomorrow. Shrugging my purse onto my left shoulder, I started to walk towards their home near the heart of the city, stifling a yawn as my heels clacked against the pavement.

Todomatsu was usually reliable when it came to our dates, but recently he seemed to be forgetting them or rescheduling right before the dates were supposed to start. I never wanted to pry into his personal life with his five identical brothers, but it did hurt that he never completely confided in me what was going on. Todomatsu always deflected my inquiries with questions about how my job was going, or promised that it wouldn't happen again.

I made my way towards their home, a sprawling mansion guarded day and night by tough-looking men. I was never allowed to get any closer than the front gate unless Todomatsu was with me, so I knew that I wasn't going to see him face-to-face today. Taking the bag off my arm and putting it on the guard shack counter, I told them that the box contained chocolates for Todomatsu and they needed to be delivered as soon as they could.

The guard gave an acknowledgement before I walked away, taking out my phone again and texting Todomatsu that I had dropped off the chocolates I'd

promised him. Rounding the street corner to head to my apartment, I felt someone grab my wrist and pull it forward sharply, sending me crashing into someone's chest.

"Lookie here," A voice I didn't recognize harshly whispered in my ear, two arms wrapping around my waist and chest, "I think it's his girl--"

I didn't give him time to say anymore, jamming the heel of my pointed shoes into his toes before slamming my elbow into his face behind me. I stumbled forward as the man released me, the momentum turning into a full run as I headed back to the mansion not even a few blocks away. My head was yanked backwards as someone grabbed a fistful of my hair, a guttural laughter sounding out as I reached into my purse for my pocket knife.

"Oh no you don't," Both of my arms were grabbed by someone else, the purse pulled off of me by yet another person, "No tricks and this will go so much smoother."

"Get off me!" I screeched, hoping that the guards would hear me. I didn't know if they had security cameras around the premises, but I could only hope that someone was watching if there were. A sweaty bandanna was shoved into my mouth, wrapped around my head and tightened, cutting off my scream.

"Are you sure that they'll come for her?" With the groan in his voice, I recognized the guy I attacked.

"Positive," The guy holding my purse commented, rummaging through it before pulling out the pocket knife, "You heard what the Sakai's got away with when they took the yellow one's girl."

I paled.

They were talking about Todomatsu's older brother and his girlfriend, and the people that threatened him were less than kind about how they treated Homura. I was assured over and over that I didn't need to worry about it ever happening to me but here I was, being slung over a burly shoulder and carried like a sack to somewhere I didn't want to go. I tried kicking and

squirming around, but the man carrying me gave a squeeze of his arm around my waist and I could only feel pain.

A trail...I had to leave a trail. With the gag in my mouth, I couldn't bite my cheek and my fingernails weren't long enough to pierce skin. My only defensive weapon was being toyed with by the man who had my purse and my toenails weren't sharp enough to cut through anything.

"How much do you think we'll get?" I heard a vehicle door slide open and I tried squirming harder to get away.

"Enough to live off of for the rest of our lives, probably," An engine roared to life as the man holding me stepped into a cargo van, a dark hood being shoved over my head before I was tossed to the floor. A hand pressed down on my head, preventing me from removing the bag or moving around as the vehicle lurched forward.

The drive felt like it took forever. I was picked up again as the door slid open, being hoisted out into what looked like a warehouse through the bag material. I didn't recognize any of the boxes or see anything that would be indicative of what they contained. My heart plummeted at the reality of what was going on, knowing that I probably wouldn't get out of this in one piece.

"Go ahead and make the call," I heard the familiar jingle of my keys in my purse, "I'll take her to the room."

I was carried away from two of the men, possibly into a room within the warehouse. The bag was ripped off my head as a flash blinded me, the digital 'snap' of a phone camera sounding out before I glared at the man.

His dyed blonde hair looked ridiculous against the dark tan skin, the rims of his eyes bearing the natural skin color. The man's clothing looked pieced together from a thrift store, a neon green button-up shirt barely tucked into black pleather pants. He held a long stick in his free hand, reaching forward and catching the other end underneath the hem of my shirt, lifting it up before I backed away.

My hands were tied behind my back, but my legs were free. I glanced around the room to see that it was barren with only two chairs underneath the ceiling light.

"You're feisty..." The man huffed in pleasure, "I like 'em wild before I break them."

Another snap of the phone sounded before he tucked it in his back pocket, dragging the stick next to him as he came closer with his free hand outstretched towards me. I charged forward and headbutted his sternum, making him fall backwards as I toppled on top of him, shifting my weight so my right shin would pin him to the ground.

I kept trying to push the gag from my mouth, unable to free my hands.

The man laughed underneath me and slid his hands up my right leg, barely reaching underneath my dress before I kicked his head with my left knee. Ensuring that he was knocked senseless, I awkwardly fell off of him and shoved him onto his stomach, reaching for the pocket I saw him put the phone in. With my hands behind my back, I couldn't reach it.

Taking a deep breath before letting all of it out, I lowered my shoulders until they hurt, bringing my arms forward and tucking my feet under the restraint. Happy to see the payoff of my yoga classes and self-defense lessons, I rolled my arms up and straightened out with my hands now in front of me. Quickly pulling the gag out of my mouth, I went for his phone again and dialed the number I knew by heart: the emergency line to the Matsuno mansion.

It took a few seconds before someone picked up.

"Mats-"

"It's (y/n) (l/n). I've been taken to a warehouse somewhere. I don't know where I am, and they took my phone and purse," I cut off the person, giving as much info as I could remember.

"(Y/n)?" I recognized the speaker on the line: Todomatsu's oldest brother.

"Osomatsu...! This isn't my phone, but I can tell the location is on..." Panic began to settle in my voice, "Please...you guys have to help me!"

"(Y/n), calm down," His voice was soothing, "I know it's scary, but you're gonna be fine. Todomatsu is working on the location right now and when we have it, he'll be on the way with Jyushimatsu."

"They said something about a ransom..."

"Don't worry about that, okay? Focus on staying safe," Osomatsu sounded like he turned away from the phone for a brief moment before speaking directly to me, "I know you're a strong woman. Just focus on yourself."

"I will."

"Good. Delete this number from the call log," With a final command, Osomatsu ended the call and I scrambled to erase the private number from the phone as the man started to stir again.

Tossing the phone towards him, I pushed myself away and tried to pry off the zip tie holding my wrists together. The end was cut off, so there was no way that I could tighten it any further to try and snap it under its own tension.

"Ooh..." The man groaned as he stood up, a hand resting on his temple as he looked over at me, "You're so much more trouble than I thought you'd be..."

I focused on escaping, ignoring the zip tie for now and bolting for the door, dodging around the man's hands as they tried to grab me. Opening the door wide, I ran from the room, blindly navigating myself to where I thought I'd be able to hide until Todomatsu and Jyushimatsu arrived.

I leapt up a stairway, finding myself in an open space that looked to be a cafeteria. Running towards the kitchen, I clambered behind a counter after making sure the door wasn't swinging to mark where I went. Catching my breath, I looked around my immediate vicinity to find a small bread knife, carefully putting the serrated blade between my wrists and the zip tie. The first cut was small, but enough for the blade to bite into the reinforced

plastic. The second cut broke the zip tie, and I rubbed my wrists for circulation before carefully listening for any sounds indicating that the men were following me.

One foot fall was close by, possibly right outside the kitchen area.

"Come on out, girlie...I promise not to harm a single hair on your head," It sounded like the same guy that brought me to the room, "Just come on out and we'll make this quick."

I heard the swinging doors open and close as he entered the kitchen, holding my breath as I tried to figure out which way he was going to come around the counter. I quietly moved towards the right, moving closer to the door before I saw his leg step in front of me. Looking up, we met eye to eye.

"Found you," He sneered as he reached towards me, making me stumble backwards to avoid his grip. Picking myself up, I ran around the counter and towards the door, panic fully setting in as I felt his arms wrap around my chest and tackle me to the ground.

"Get off of me!" I screamed as loud as I could before I felt something slice through the corner of my lips, the warm taste of iron flooding my mouth as my hands reached up to feel a deep cut carved towards my left ear. Spitting out the blood, I tried to crawl away as I felt another line of pain from my right shoulder to my neck.

"You're going to pay tenfold for what you did to me," The man positioned himself on top of me, straddling my waist as he licked the blade of a pocket knife...

my

knife. He lowered it to my right cheek, pressing against it as I tried to move my head away from the blade.

"You're psychotic...!" Another cut from my cheek to my chin blossomed in pain as he lowered the knife to the neckline of my dress.

"Thanks for the compliment."

A scream of fear was ripped from my throat as he cut open the front of my dress, a hungry look in his eyes as he traced over my collarbone with the knife. I felt an instant release of pressure as the man was no longer sitting on me, a comforting grip holding my shoulders as a suit jacket was placed across my chest.

In confusion, I looked up to see Todomatsu smiling down at me, his lips brushing across my forehead before letting me go to stand up, adjusting his gloves.

I watched as he walked towards a fistfight, the man engaging with someone wearing a yellow shirt.

Jyushimatsu

...they had both made it in time.

Todomatsu carefully reached into the fight and pulled the knife that the man was using, swiftly turning it around and thrusting it back into the fight. Jyushimatsu stilled for a moment before standing up next to his young brother, his breathing labored. I partially flinched when both brothers looked back down to me.

"Did he do anything else...?" Todomatsu knelt next to me and held me gently as he picked me up, not seeming to mind the blood staining his jacket.

"No...no, nothing happened beyond the cutting," I quietly muttered. He seemed content with my answer before looking towards Jyushimatsu.

"Everything else taken care of?"

"No loose ends," The yellow-clad brother smiled.

"Then let's go home and get you cleaned up, (y/n)."

"There was one thing they got wrong..." I gently lay my head against his shoulder as Todomatsu walked down the stairs, the warehouse completely silent.

"What was that?"

"They said I was your girl."

"Yeah, they did get that wrong," Todomatsu laughed, "They forgot that the six of us like to share."

Todomatsu and Stalker!Reader

Inspired by O2o_b33's prompt.

I bit down on my bottom lip nervously, eyeing the latte art that floated in the foam of my hot drink through the screen of my phone. The white steamed milk foam folded and swirled around itself to create the image of a soaring phoenix, its tail feathers circling the inner rim of the coffee cup while its head tucked beneath its wings in a wide display of feathers.

I had only asked for a cute latte art pattern, but when the male barista placed this on the counter, I was definitely stunned as I carefully carried it to a small table near the front of the coffee shop.

It was nearly impossible to drink, but I gently took a sip in a place where the art wouldn't be messed up. Of course I had taken a few photos, but...

I glanced back at the barista, watching him help the customers still in line with their orders. His dark hair was kept relatively short and tucked behind his ears, the fringe line resting just above his eyes. His lips were almost always pulled into a tight smile, the show of emotion only dropping when others that looked like him entered the cafe.

His name was Todomatsu Matsuno, the youngest in a sextuplet family and seemingly the only brother with a job.

Taking another sip from the latte disturbed the art a little, but I glanced at the social media page displayed on my phone. Todomatsu's name was at the top of the page before I thumbed through the pictures, feeling my heartbeat accelerate as I fought down a blush. There were thumbnails of videos that he had recorded of him and his brothers reviewing different things, from food and drinks to toys and games. The channel was small, but the effort he put into each video was apparent.

I knew who Todomatsu was, what his likes and dislikes were, and his work schedule...but he didn't know me. I was just another face in the crowd to

him.

I think I preferred it this way.

I knew that stalking was considered wrong, especially when the stalker would take actions that would cause harm to the person they're following. I'm not

that

crazy.

No, I was happy enough to just sit in the cafe and drink while making headway on my work. The laptop in front of me was showing a typed document, a story that was in the beginning stages of editing before I sent it off to my actual editor for feedback. The hero of the story was based on Todomatsu, but I knew that he wouldn't ever read it...He would rather watch live streams than read a book.

I swallowed another sip before putting my fingers to the keyboard, mentally diving back into the world that I had created.

The week went by slowly, my work sitting still just short of completion as I stared at the screen. My thumb rubbed the outer edge of another cup of coffee, the right amount of sugar and milk thoroughly mixed in, as my mind ran through different scenarios of how to finish the last chapter of the book. I had several ideas of what I wanted to do, but nothing I typed out ever seemed to fit as a conclusion.

I stared at the blinking cursor, completely unsure of where to go in the story.

"I'm guessing that it's either a very difficult paper or some kind of story that you write for fun."

I flinched a little as someone stopped next to me, drawing my attention up to their face and instantly recognizing Todomatsu.

"Ah, yeah..." I shifted my gaze back to the laptop, "It's a story that I write for fun, but I don't know how to end it."

"Well," He started before pulling out a chair and turning it around to sit in, "Mind if I ask what kind of story you're writing? My brother is a huge sucker for romantic light novels, so...I think I've got some experience if you need someone to bounce ideas off of."

"Oh, I don't think it's really anything that you need to be concerned about," I huffed out a light laugh as I nervously sipped my coffee.

"You've been staring at the screen for the past hour or so. I'd imagine that you need either a fresh cup or a fresh perspective to get you going," Todomatsu leaned forward a little, his comment bringing my attention to the now cold coffee, "And seeing that we don't have any free refills, I'm willing to use my break to help you out."

"You really don't need to do that," I set the cup down and turned towards him, watching as his dark eyes swept over my face before partially hooding.

"Go ahead and try me. If I don't help you find an idea to write about, then I'll buy you another coffee," The smug smirk on his lips was enticing to watch form, showing confidence in himself about a story he had no idea about.

"All right, I'll take that little wager," I leaned against the back of my chair, "It's the last chapter, the main hero has saved the princess but isn't sure if he needs to accept the king's proposal to marry the princess. She's fallen head over heels for the hero."

"Does the hero know that the princess loves him?"

"She showed him signs, but never explicitly told him the words."

"Then maybe he wants to find someone who loves him back for who he is," Todomatsu quickly offered, repeating something that I had thought of before, "Has this been the only love interest that you've set up in the story?"

"No," I thought of one of the barmaids that I had the hero interact with, lining her up with my physicality and helping the hero out when he was running out of options of how to save the princess, "There are a few others in the story, but they've never really been flushed out as love interests. They're more like NPCs that guide the hero on his quest."

"Then maybe one of them could be a surprise love interest?"

"I'd have to rewrite some of the story for that to work, though," Biting my bottom lip nervously, I scrolled up through the large story, catching bits of paragraphs that would need rework if I felt like putting in a surprise love interest, "I'd have to ask for more time..."

"Time? Are you on a scheduled release?" Todomatsu sounded interested, his chair creaking as he leaned a little closer.

"I've still got another few days before I send this off...but the rewrite shouldn't take that long," I mentally screamed at myself, not wanting Todomatsu to find anything out about me. I was happy with him not knowing me or understanding that he was my reference for the hero character. I didn't want him to know that I didn't want to complete the story because I had too much fun writing about

him

.

I didn't want him to find out because I didn't want to leave Sutabaa. The atmosphere was wonderful, the coffee was great...the company was the best.

If Todomatsu found out that I used his likeness without permission, he would get mad at me and I was more than likely barred from coming to Sutabaa ever again. Employee harassment is what the charge would more than likely be--

"I think it would be a nice touch," Todomatsu looked over his shoulder at something, "Ah, damn...break's almost over."

He started to push the chair he was using back to the table he grabbed it from, "If you manage to publish it, would you mind if I read it?"

"I don't think it would really interest you that much, Todomatsu," I uttered his name effortlessly, quickly recovering and pointing to his nametag, "I wouldn't pin you as a romance novel kind of guy."

"Maybe not, but I'm always willing to read new things."

Todomatsu gave a heavy sigh as he pulled the brown knitted cap from his head, dusting off the snowflakes that clung to it from outside. Kicking off his shoes and moving them out of the way, he stretched and trudged up the stairs to fall face first on the green couch in the room he and his brothers shared.

"The hell's wrong with you?" The oldest asked as he scratched at his back, laying on his right side while reading some kind of manga from a magazine.

"Just tired from work," Todomatsu shifted to lay on his back, draping an arm over his eyes as he took in a breath, "Winter usually gets busy with all of the seasonal flavors in stock."

"Any problem customers you're gonna complain about?" The third oldest brother questioned as he turned a page over in the book he was reading, his back leaning against the side of the couch.

"No, not really..." The youngest sighed as he closed his eyes, letting darkness swallow his vision, "There was one customer that I actually enjoyed watching while I worked, but she stopped coming by a month ago or so..."

"Oh, that writer person?"

"Yeah," Todomatsu acknowledged, thinking back to when he had offered her some help when she appeared to be struggling with something, "I never asked what her username was..."

"Maybe you'll come across it on your phone," Choromatsu hummed as he continued to read, "You're always on it anyway."

"She told me what the last part was about, so that may help..." The youngest dug out his phone from his pants back pocket, unlocking the screen and scrolling through a writing website, "Something about a hero saving a princess and declining the king's offer for her hand in marriage."

The flinch in Choromatsu's shoulders was hard to miss, drawing both brothers' attention towards him as he hastily closed the book and set it on his lap.

"Choromatsu?" Osomatsu raised an eyebrow, "Did you need us to leave and give you the sign?"

"No!" The third-eldest recoiled from the offer, looking back towards the youngest, "I think she's a published author...this customer of yours."

He held up the book in his hands, the object shaking slightly as Todomatsu took it from him. The cover was a beautifully drawn picture of a hero with short dark hair and a kind smile on his face, completely clad in medieval European metal armor while looking towards a princess. The princess was wearing a fanciful dress that looked to be way too wide to wear every day, a happy smile on her face while she aimed her face towards him with closed eyes. A scattering of characters looked at the happy couple from the background -- a burly man that looked to be a blacksmith, a woman dressed in witch's clothing, and a barmaid that eerily resembled the customer.

Todomatsu scanned the front cover for a name, finding one beneath his thumb.

'Miki Habu'. It was clearly a pen name, an alias that the customer could publish under without giving away her actual name.

He racked his brain trying to remember the name he'd call out whenever her order was completed, only to pale as she stayed by the counter so he didn't need to call her from the customer sitting area.

Tossing the book back to Choromatsu with a quick word of thanks, Todomatsu frantically typed into his phone to find a page describing Miki Habu in detail. Finding a website that had her works listed, as well as an 'About Me' page, he tried to find a picture of her to see if they were the same person.

The kind smile on her lips when she thanked him for her order was the same one that smiled back at him through the phone screen. Her eyes were just as lively despite the heavier makeup in the professional photo, and her hair was professionally arranged in loose curls that made the length appear shorter than it actually was.

This Miki Habu was his writing customer.

There was an e-mail address that was listed as a point of contact for the public relations agent and Todomatsu swiftly created a professional-sounding message inquiring if there were any events that Miki Habu would be attending in the near future. He knew that he wouldn't be getting a response for a while, due to the offices being closed today and tomorrow for a holiday, but he still hoped that the agent wasn't slammed with work and could respond quickly.

A soft ping sounded on his phone, notifying him that someone had liked a picture he had posted an hour ago of his latest latte art creations. The picture was on Photogram, with the text of the notification stating '(Y/n) (L/n) has liked your picture!'.

Todomatsu dismissed the notification with a sigh, silencing the app from sending him notifications for now.

"Well, I hope that she starts coming back," Choromatsu opened up the book, settling into his reading position, "It's a really good book with a twist that I didn't see coming."

I internally screamed at myself as I stared up at the Sutabaa sign above the automatic door, my laptop bag hanging over my left shoulder as I clung to it

like a lifeline in a tumultuous ocean.

I wanted to be here, but I couldn't afford to be seen...not after the little slip up I had with Photogram, and especially not after letting Todomatsu help me with my underselling book. It wasn't because of him that the book wasn't selling, but it made me feel horrible because he'd ask about it and I couldn't really lie to him about it.

"Welcome to Sutabaa," One of the female baristas cheerfully called out as my feet dragged me to the front counter, "Do you know what you would like to order?"

"Latte...extra foam, with some art if possible..." I muttered through my usual order, paying in exact change and stepping aside to the pick-up counter. I pulled the wool hat further onto my head and fluffed up my scarf to hide my face before I realized that the man I didn't want to see...was staring right at me.

My fingers fiddled with the taut sling of the laptop case as I tried to look like I was suddenly interested in the patternless detail in the hard countertop, chewing on my bottom lip like it had shifted into gum.

"Here you are, ma'am," Todomatsu set the cup and saucer in front of me, twisting the cup so the art faced me, "One latte with art."

I stared at the emblem patterned into the milky foam, my face paling as I hesitantly took the cup and saucer in my hands.

The emblem was a standard medieval tower shield with a crown emblazoned on the front, wrapped in a thick vine of thorns. The emblem was also from the book that I had written while I frequented this cafe.

I slowly looked up to Todomatsu who held my gaze from beneath the wool hat.

"I'd like to speak with you during my break."

"...okay..."

Gently taking the cup to my usual table, I sat the laptop case down on the tabletop and stared at the latte art, both amazed at his progression in the skill and wondering how long I had been standing there for him to accomplish the amount of detail. I lost track of time as I stared at the latte, the hot drink cooling as I slowly started taking off the winter gear that was starting to overheat my body.

"You haven't touched it."

Todomatsu shocked me out of my stupor, drawing my attention up to him as he pulled up a chair to sit at the small table, his eyes meeting mine after checking the status of the drink that he made me. He didn't look disappointed, but had a contemplative look on his face.

"I...do you know, then?" I looked back to the emblem crafted in the foam, indicating what I was asking him.

"I figured it out when my brother told me that the book he was reading had the same plot as what I described," Todomatsu gave a soft sigh, "Everything else was a guess."

"Then...'A Gift of Thorns'...?"

"Written by a 'Miki Habu' that had a romantical twist that no one saw coming despite the writing indicating that everything wasn't as it seemed," He met my eyes once more, "Why did your character die?"

"I...all of those characters are mine," I closed my eyes and brought the cold drink to my lips, taking a sip, "I can use them as I see fit to help the story along."

"But the barmaid

was

you, correct?" Todomatsu held up his phone screen, the cover of the book zoomed in on the character I had told the artist to model after a younger

picture of me. I looked away in shame, giving him the answer he needed, "Why did you have her killed by the love interest?"

"Because the barmaid was considered a threat to the hero in the love interest's eyes."

"And was the hero modeled after my looks and personality?"

"...yes," I didn't see the point in lying to him, not when the book was officially published.

There was a long moment of silence before Todomatsu spoke again.

"I know that the book is already out and published...but would it be okay if the hero and the barmaid got to know each other a bit more? There's no love interest to kill her, but she can always decline the hero's intentions."

I jerked my head up to look right into Todomatsu's dark hues, the look on his face both pleading for a chance and preparation for rejection.

"I...think I can write a redaction," I set the latte down, the foam shifting the tower into a misshapen heart.

Nyarlathotep!Todomatsu and Reader

(Written as a challenge to both myself and

, using the same prompt. Go read their version, too!)

She stared straight ahead, her dull eyes locked onto the thing in the corner that stared back at her. The young woman didn't know how, but the thing had followed her from where she lived previously to this small room.

There was only one door and it had followed the people that showed her in, her gaze completely fixated on it as she moved into the room without complaint. She couldn't look away from it...she

shouldn't

look away from it. The thing grew larger when she didn't see it, attaching itself to the room and eventually growing flesh-like tendrils that plunged into her arms and legs.

Her eyes hurt from staring at it for so long...but even a blink was enough to let the grotesque thing grow. Her eyes felt dry and cracked, the eyelids strained at being open for...she couldn't remember the last time she blinked. It was definitely before she moved here, though, wherever 'here' was.

The thing in the corner pulsed and rippled like a bowl of rotten pudding, its single red eye blinking occasionally as it stared back at the young woman, the colliding of fleshy eyelids creating a squelching sound that reminded her of a hand tightening around warmed up ground meat.

"Go away," She resisted blinking as it continued to do so, tempting her into closing her eyes for just a brief moment. The only response to her demand was the squishing that the thing's eyelids made when they closed, the thin black pupil focusing on her.

"Ms. (L/n), it's time for your physical," Someone commented near her, their hand taking hers and leading her out of the room while she strained to keep eye contact with the monstrous pudding-like creature. It curled itself around the corner of the doorway, watching her leave before ducking back into her room.

"No!" She cried out and tried to run back to watch the creature, to force it back into its small state, "If I can't see it, it'll eat me!!"

More hands grabbed at her as several fleshy tendrils shot out from the room she was brought from, latching onto the ceiling, walls, and floor with a sick elasticity. Each tendril expanded where it attached to, spreading along as the woman screamed in terror, the hands gripping her clothes tightly before her tongue was shoved back near her throat by some kind of cloth, the rough fabric tearing at the corners of her already dry lips as it was tightened behind her head.

She screeched into the cloth, closing her eyes as the fingers came too close and feeling her eyes water up at the sudden relief, twisting her shoulders violently to try and escape.

"Ms. (L/n), please control yourself!" The same voice called out, a gurgling sound emerging from its throat before rows of teeth exploded from the mouth, broiling over the body as it quickly expanded into a bulbous form with several connecting strands of flesh that linked to the ceiling above them. A guttural groaning bubbled up, red pockets of blood rising in its throat before popping and spreading the visceral spray everywhere.

The woman known by only a last name screamed into the fabric, her eyes twisting away from the terrifying display of how a human could turn itself inside out. The others were swelling in response, their skin not enough to hold the mass of meat and flesh as it tore open, organs spilling through the newly opened holes as they reached out to her.

'Bend to me.'

Ms. (L/n) stilled as a dark voice called out from her room, the small creature now pouring out of the doorway as its dark slime-like flesh ripped

apart and reformed around its new size. The mouth that it used to have was now a sharp beak, its tongue rolling around its face as the unblinking red eye started right at her.

She couldn't move as the monsters around her clung to her form, their fingers pulling at her clothes and skin, frantically to get at the tender meat underneath. A hand hooked around the fabric keeping her from speaking and wormed its way into her mouth, the vile taste of iron and copper coating her taste buds as the fingers grabbed at her tongue.

'Bend to me!'

The previously small monstrous creature was nearly the size of the room she was currently in, its slimy texture clinging to the walls and floor underneath her as the thing reached out for her. The humanoid horrors had torn off all of her clothes and began to peel back her skin, her own blood pouring onto the floor and mixing with the creature's own fluids, Ms. (L/n) quickly losing her footing and falling down to the ground.

She screamed as loudly as she could before another hand was shoved into her mouth, smothering her cry as smaller tendrils slid down her throat and poked into her nasal cavities. Her eyes rolled up in their sockets as it became impossible to breathe.

'Bend to me, (y/n)!'

The thing that started this whole thing was now consuming her legs, the limbs chewed up uselessly by the massive beak as the elongated tongue wrapped around her and the other human horrors, eating everything up indiscriminately. The beak pierced into her chest, clamping down on her heart...but she didn't die, looking up at the Lovecraftian horror that was staring right back at her, the single red eye never leaving her face as it morphed into a smaller version and splitting in two. A man's face emerged from underneath the pudding-like skin, his lips pulled back into a wicked sneer as he glared down at (y/n).

'Bend to us!'

(Y/n) gasped as her eyes flew open, gripping her stomach tightly as she panted heavily, scrambling to sit up in her bed. Silence flooded her ears before she heard a small blurble of water, drawing her attention over to a dark spot in the corner of her bedroom.

It was a small spot that shifted with the light before she realized it looked like a pudding stain that had sat for months without being cleaned up. Her abdomen twitched in pain as she stared at it, her gut yelling at her to not let this thing out of her sight.

(Y/n)'s eyes widened in fear when two red eyes opened from the pudding-like thing, staring right back at her as a soft voice cooed in her head, a voice that didn't belong to her.

'Bend to me, (y/n)...'

Vampire!Todomatsu and Reader

His tongue drew in several swallows of the delicious liquid, the seal over the bite partially coming undone and letting some trickle down his chin and throat. The young woman underneath him groaned weakly as her hands held onto the back of his head, his own hands pressing into her back and sliding underneath her shirt.

"Todo...matsu..." Her voice sounded strained as her fingers tried to pull his head away. He laughed to himself and kept drinking, "Please...wait...!"

Downing one last mouthful of warm lifegiving drink, Todomatsu released his deathgrip on her neck, fully breaking away and letting his large fangs slide from her skin. Slipping his tongue out to lap up what had fallen from his lips, he looked down at the woman in his arms with a gentle smile.

"See? That wasn't so terrible, right?"

"That's...the fifth time today," The whine in her voice was more than enough to kick his drive back into high gear, but he held back as he gently set her down on her bed as his tongue carefully cleaned up the bite, "If you do this any more, then you're probably gonna kill me."

"Last I checked, a little love bite like this won't kill you," He smiled to himself as the back of his index finger brushed against the agitated skin, the two holes where his fangs fit perfectly still red and mad from the abrupt puncture earlier, "I haven't been taking enough to kill you."

"Even a papercut can kill if it's applied a thousand times..." The young woman frowns and turns over on the bed, her back facing Todomatsu as his eyelids partially lowered.

"(Y/n)..." He lifted up a hand to rest it on her shoulder before pulling it back and standing up from the bed, tearing his eyes from her form as he bit his lower lip in frustration, "I had warned you when we started dating of what I

was, and you had agreed to help me through the tougher times...It's not my fault that your blood is so...delicious."

"I only agreed to help you when you couldn't obtain blood from that clinic you and your brothers have," (Y/n)'s voice sounded strained, as if she was trying to yell without having the energy to put into the words, "We've only been together for a few weeks...and I don't think we should continue this relationship if you're just going to treat me like your own personal blood bank..."

Todomatsu held back a snarl, his fangs pressing down hard on his bottom lip.

This was absolutely ridiculous! He had given (y/n) everything that she had wanted -- money to pay off some bills, new clothing when hers were worn out, and even made sure that her apartment was safe and secure when she was worried about someone following her home.

Now she was going to threaten their intimate relationship because...she thought he was too greedy?

"Fine..." The single word held so much venom, his anger seeping through as Todomatsu slammed the bedroom door behind him. The loud bang echoed through the small apartment, spurring him to leave the confined space and escape to his own home.

"Ahaha -- someone's mad, aren't they?"

The one voice he didn't want to hear floated through the air as soon as the front door was closed, kicking off his shoes in a huff before stomping up the stairs towards the shared bedroom.

"It's not your business, Jyushimatsu."

"But if they're mad, then it

is

my business! That means someone needs to be taken care of, that someone knows about

us

," The giddiness in Jyushimatsu's voice finally drew Todomatsu's attention towards him, meeting his blood red stare as a manic grin spread across his lips. The fifth brother of the sextuplets stood near the front door, dressed in his usual long-sleeved yellow sweatshirt with a blue pair of shorts resting just underneath, but there was something in his attitude that sent a wave of worry down Todomatsu's spine, "I can take care of them!"

"No!" The youngest shouted before recovering and repeating the word in a softer tone, "No, Jyushimatsu...there's no one that needs to be taken care of."

"Well, something about your display set him off," Todomatsu flinched as a new voice entered the conversation, his gaze snapping to the sliding door of the common room as it opened to reveal the third brother. Propping an arm against the doorpost, the newcomer slowly raised his hooded gaze to the youngest brother, "And if I didn't know any better, I'd say that it would be the scent of agitation coming from the blood coursing through your body."

(Y/n)'s blood...?

Todomatsu's eyes widened a little before he clenched his jaw tightly, "Fuck off, Choromatsu. Who I fed from didn't put our family in any danger."

"Are you certain about that?" Choromatsu didn't move from his leaning posture but the threat of an attack grew in Todomatsu's mind, forcing him to take a few steps away in preparation to flee, "You've been less than helpful at the clinic, and since you have yet to take part in the inventory that we've accumulated...you're finding it somewhere else that we haven't agreed to."

"Big brother Todomatsu is breaking his own rule!" Jyushimatsu laughed while taking a step forward, the smile slowly closing into a toothy grin, "You were so adamant about taking samples of the collection, and you have yet to feed for the past few weeks...but still smell like blood."

"Leave me alone!" Todomatsu yelled out in frustration, slamming his left fist into the wall just behind him and leaving a sizable crater, "I've already said before that whom I feed from isn't going to expose us for what we are! She knows what I am, and has given me her word to keep the secret safe."

"It's a girl, then!" Jyushimatsu let out a sharp laugh, swinging his wide gaze towards Choromatsu who only cast a sparing glance back.

Shit!

"Yes, but we have an agreement between us," Todomatsu lowered a glower towards the third brother, knowing that of the ones present, he was the larger threat. Jyushimatsu was more impulsive, but more than likely wouldn't act without some kind of direction or order, "I do feed from her when I feel a craving coming on, but I only take what I need."

"Then why is she feeling agitated?"

"I don't know."

"Bullshit," Choromatsu's eyes narrowed at the instant answer, leaving Todomatsu to turn his head away as a glare replaced the innocent look that was on his face, "What you do in your free time is of no concern to us...but I won't stand by while you continue to expose yourself to some human over and over again."

"Fuck's sake, shut up!" Todomatsu hissed as he began tromping up the staircase, "It's not like I'm gonna kill her!"

"Just like Karamatsu?"

The question from Choromatsu's lips made Todomatsu freeze in place, recalling the horrid memory of watching the second brother lose his mind after accidentally slaughtering his fiancé decades ago. He had been in control up until the last second...until something deep inside him snapped and he bit completely through her neck, leaving Karamatsu bathed in her innocent blood.

"...that's not going to happen," The youngest brother shook his head to get rid of the devastating imagery, continuing up the stairs and into the bedroom the brothers all shared.

Todomatsu took in a deep breath as he sat back up from leaning over (y/n)'s trembling form, licking his lips to catch the remaining blood droplets before they could fall as his eyes took in the sight of her clothed form underneath him.

This was becoming too much for him...the sense of drowning in pleasure as her blood rushed down his throat, the unmistakable thirst that always seemed to grow whenever he had his fill -- it was becoming too much for Todomatsu to bear.

"I...thought you said that you were done earlier?" (Y/n) whined as she tried to sit up, her arms shaking with exertion before Todomatsu helped her.

"I was, but my hunger..." He gently bit his lower lip in worry, "...it's growing."

"Then it's as I suspected."

A new voice called out from the bedroom doorway, snapping Todomatsu's focus from (y/n) to see Choromatsu standing with his arms folded over his chest.

"What the hell are you doing here?" The anger grew in the youngest, his eyes swirling from their dark hues into a blood red glow as his fangs grew in size, their tips resting near his chin.

"I was invited -- pleaded with, actually, because (y/n) was worried that you'd kill her," The calmness in Choromatsu's voice irked Todomatsu, gritting his teeth in agitation as he positioned himself between the third brother and (y/n).

"I

said

that I had this under control."

"And yet, this is your tenth feeding this week."

"So?"

"The rest of us only feed once a month...you're consuming her like it's an addiction," Choromatsu lowered his arms as his eyes took on a similar red glow, "In fact, you

are

addicted."

"The fuck do you know? You've never fed from a human!" Todomatsu snarled, "You've only taken baby sips from blood bags!"

"Sips because too much of a favored blood can drive a vampire insane, make them develop a dependency on it and force them to completely drain their unintended victim dry without a single ounce of restraint," Choromatsu continued to walk forward, holding the youngest's glare, "Look at the person you call your girlfriend, Todomatsu. She doesn't even look the same as she did almost a month ago!"

Todomatsu cast a quick glance over his shoulder, seeing the state that (y/n) was in.

Her hair had lost the vibrant colors that caught his eye originally, her skin becoming pale and ghost-like as her face had thinned out dramatically. The clothes that used to fit her body comfortably had somehow grown in size...no, she had become smaller, as if (y/n)'s body was collapsing in on itself.

The forced comparison between the (y/n) he had fallen for and the one that weakly lay on her bed made his eyes go wide, his lips parting a little in disbelief as his fangs slowly shrank back to their usual size.

"But, I haven't done anything different!" He tore his attention from her back to his brother, meeting Choromatsu's stern gaze as he tried to not sound pathetic, "This wasn't my doing!"

"Todomatsu, please--"

"

This isn't my fault!

" Todomatsu shouted in frustration, baring his fangs and tensing his fingers as anger surged through his system. Something collided against his right palm before a loud squelching sound splattered against their ears, another loud thud sounding before silence completely enveloped the room.

Choromatsu's eyes went wide before the red glow shrank into pinpricks within his hues, his fangs completely bared as he jumped towards Todomatsu. The youngest quickly raised his hands as the older shoved him down against the bed, partially twisting out of the way to where he wouldn't hit (y/n) wherever she was laying on it.

The two vampires tangled with each other before Choromatsu leapt off on the other side of the bed, rushing towards something crumpled against the far wall as Todomatsu took up a defensive posture over (y/n)'s pillows.

"Hold on, (y/n)..." Both vampires whispered the human's name at the same time, drawing Todomatsu's attention to where Choromatsu had landed.

"Shit...this is bad," He reached down and placed his hands on something soft, a pained cry sounded from somewhere in front of the third brother, "Hang on...I know it hurts, but I know you'll make it..."

Todomatsu slowly took in the details around his brother, seeing the large blood splatter form an outline of twisted wings on either side of his outline along the wall while a blood trail stretched towards the bed on the floor. His body grew tense as the blood tapered out on the bedsheets, drawing his attention to where he had thought (y/n)'s body was, seeing the empty pillows and crumpled bedsheets forming a humanoid shape.

Todomatsu's breathing picked up as his nose quickly picked up the sickly sweet scent of (y/n)'s blood, now fully permeating throughout the bedroom.

"(Y/n)...?" His eyes slowly followed the trail of blood from the bed back to the wall, watching helplessly as Choromatsu stood up with a mangled figure draped in his arms, "No, wait...!"

"You don't get to touch her again!" The older vampire hissed, the glow in his eyes growing with more ferocity as the younger one spat in reply, his lips curling back to reveal his elongated fangs once more.

"You're not the one to make that call!"

"You're right...she was the one to set that boundary," Choromatsu barely glanced down as his expression partially softened, hardening again as his eyes lifted to Todomatsu, "A boundary that you crossed a long time ago."

"No...that's wrong!"

"Todo..." The soft whimper of (y/n)'s voice silenced the protest in Todomatsu's throat, his expression faltering from rage to fear and worry as her eyes shakily rested on his form, "...that's enough..."

The gargle in her voice was hard to listen through, sounding like something had ruptured within her lungs.

"Hush, (y/n). We'll get you help," Choromatsu made a move to step away before Todomatsu jumped at him, his taloned hands swiping at the face of his older brother before the visage shifted into fog. The younger spun around quickly with a snarl, seeing the vampire and prey walk through the bedroom door.

"No...stop! Don't take her from me!" The door slammed shut in his face as he pounced, colliding with the solid wood before ripping the entire door from its hinges, "Wait!"

"You've already done that, Totty."

The echo of Choromatsu's voice bounced through the empty apartment, drawing a howl of anger from Todomatsu. He tore through the tiny place, constantly searching for the vampire that stole away his food as his nose flooded with the scent of her blood.

The last thing he felt was a sharp pain in the back of his neck before darkness swallowed his vision.

"--had left me no choice. It was either remove ourselves from the situation, or let him devour her."

"No, that's fair. No one's questioning your intentions, Choromatsu. I guess I'm more concerned with the aftermath, considering what I had walked in on when you told me to 'take care of him'."

"Was it as bad as we thought?"

"Worse..."

Todomatsu strained to lift his right hand, finding it heavier to move than normal before feeling a rush of nausea hit his head.

"Ah, you're awake," Choromatsu chided without emotion, as if bored, "I'd remain laying down if I were you. Going berserk like that for a few hours would leave me drained."

"Berserk...?" Todomatsu winced as his throat felt parched, the feeling similar to being in the desert for hours on end.

"You went a little crazy," Another voice joined in, drawing a grimace on Todomatsu's face as he recognized the second oldest brother, "I'm glad that I was able to arrive when I did before you started causing some real property damage."

"Fuck..." Todomatsu slowly recovered from the nausea and glanced around the room, remembering how the common room in his family's house looked, "What happened to (y/n)? Where is she?"

"Well..." Karamatsu started before he sat in view of the youngest brother, his hands tucked into the pocket of his sweatshirt, "She's currently in the hospital undergoing surgery."

"...what the hell happened?"

"You went into a frenzy when I confronted you," Choromatsu stated, not leaving his post by the main door to the common room as his eyes held a disgusted look, "(Y/n) grew worried for her own safety after her own pleas fell on your deaf ears, so she reached out to us for help to try and rein you in. You took exception to the 'intrusion'."

"Is...she there because of me?" Todomatsu felt his heart sink deeper into the pit of his stomach as he tried to remember what had happened.

"Yes."

He averted his eyes and moved onto his side, away from his brothers as he tried to gather his thoughts.

The last thing he could remember was the thought that (y/n) was...prey.

"You were warned about this, Totty," Karamatsu gave a heavy sigh, "But you were insistent on being turned into what we were."

"Is there anything that I could do to make this better?"

"Are you looking for pity or for advice?"

"Either at this point...I fucked up, and I know that I let myself become too dependent on (y/n)," The youngest brother barely looked over his shoulder at the other two in the room.

"Stay away from (y/n) for the meantime," Choromatsu quickly answered, "Ichimatsu was able to erase some of the more gruesome details about you, but that will be undone as soon as she sees you again. Give her space to recover physically."

"Then...what do I do for food?"

"You'll feed like the rest of us -- once a month and only through the clinic," Karamatsu's normally kind eyes hardened into a stern glare, "We'll help you through the withdrawal symptoms, but the entire process is up to you on how quickly you can revert."

Silence filled the room before Todomatsu gave a heavy sigh.

"If that's what I need to do, then I'll do it..."

"That's all we ask," Karamatsu gave a gentle smile as the stern expression faded, snapping his fingers and releasing Todomatsu's limbs from their tensioned posture. Todomatsu sat up and rubbed his ankles and wrists, bringing feeling back to his feet and hands.

"Will...I ever be able to see (y/n) again?"

"If you take your recovery seriously...then it's possible."

Todomatsu x Reader

His hands remained busy with the seemingly non-stop coffee orders while his ears and eyes took in every piece of information they could gather, listening to the other baristas call out orders and correctly creating the caffeine drinks. While a little shorter than the other workers in the cafe, he was never bothered by it and seemed to thrive in the spotty rush schedule the ward had every day.

Todomatsu had managed to keep his job after the blunder his brothers had created, driving him to be more vigilant about their infrequent appearances. He was rather proud of the hard-earned promotion, becoming the cafe's manager, yet he was ecstatic with himself for keeping his biggest secret from the five demons: his girlfriend.

His little trists at mixers were nothing more than a cover for spending time with her outside of the house, taking the time to have small dates or sexual endeavors with the woman he loved dearly.

To ensure that his secret remained that way, he had asked for her not to drop by the cafe unannounced after describing what he would go through should his brothers find out about her, nearly pleading with her when she teased a surprise visit. (Y/n) had promised to not do anything that would endanger his life with them.

"One last chore before locking up," He muttered to himself as he went about closing the coffee shop, taking off his apron and throwing it into the dirty clothes bin. After hanging the chairs from their tables, he began to sweep up the floor until he heard the door chime announce a late straggler, "We're closed for the day. Come back tomorrow."

"Oh, I know," The lilt in the speaker's voice sent a wave of pleasure down his spine, immediately drawing his attention to the young woman standing just inside the coffee shop, "I figured there wouldn't be any harm if I visited you at this time."

"Oh, babe," He breathed, leaning the broom against the wall before approaching (y/n) to take her hand, "You play a risky game."

Before she could answer, he leaned up to kiss her on the lips while dragging her hand behind his back, ensuring that she couldn't pull away. (Y/n) giggled into the kiss before standing back up, gently tapping the tip of his nose with her index finger.

"Risk is my middle name," Todomatsu barely caught the playful look on her face before she grabbed his butt, using his trick against him and drawing out a surprised yet pleased yelp from the man, "Finish your chores. I've got a surprise for you."

With reluctance, Todomatsu pulled himself away from (y/n) and began sweeping the floor once more, "What kind of surprise?"

"Your birthday's coming up, right?"

Todomatsu had completely forgotten, letting out a resigned sigh at the thought of spending the day with his other brothers, "...yeah."

He heard the latch on the front door lock, drawing both his curiosity and his attention. (Y/n) had moved from the customer section after locking up the door to behind the barista counter, holding up a little gift bag in her hand for him to see, "Got something that might put a spring in your step."

Sweeping up the dirt and debris into the broom pan, he only hummed in interest before tossing the garbage and placing both broom and pan back into their places. With a practiced move, Todomatsu held (y/n)'s hand and pulled her close, wrapping his arms around her waist while his head nestled between her breasts.

He was

never

bothered by his height.

"Totty," The cursed nickname fell from her lips with grace, his heart skipping a beat when she placed her arms around his shoulders to keep him against her, "I'm not the gift, silly."

"Doesn't matter," His words were slightly muffled, "I still enjoy this."

"I do, too, but your shop isn't really the best place. I was thinking..." The way she paused sent a tingle of anticipation down his body, Todomatsu fighting hard to keep his erection from being obvious, "...back at my apartment."

"For the gift, or for

you

?" He barely lifted his head to look into her beautiful hues, satisfied to see a furious blush wash over her cheeks.

"For me," (Y/n)'s anxious laugh was adorable, "But your gift can also be enjoyed there, too."

"Should I open it now?"

"Please...?"

Todomatsu slowly pulled himself away from her chest, maneuvering his hips in a way that made it clear how he felt about her. He carefully took the gift bag from her hand, looking for any note on the outside before pushing the packing tissue out of the way when he didn't see anything. His eyes fell on a little flipbook, taking it out to see the crafted care put into it.

'

Lovely💔Coupons

' was written on the front page, the calligraphy amateurish but beautiful all the same. He thumbed the little book open to see various handwritten pages: 'Free Cuddles', '30-Minute Back/Foot Massage', and 'Free Shoulder Rubs' were among the many. His attention was snared by a few black pages with

red marker scrawled on them, the words indicating his favorite sexual positions with her.

"And these are only valid for your apartment?" Todomatsu lifted his gaze to (y/n) without moving his head, the expression catching her off-guard for a moment before nodding. He didn't miss the quick inhale nor the clenching of thighs she made at the same time.

He placed the coupon book in his back pocket, taking her hand in his while twirling the shop keys around his free index finger, "Well, we better get going, then. I can't let these coupons expire."

"Oh, they...don't have an expiration date," The flushed look on his girlfriend's face was adorable, his desire to see her underneath him growing more.

"Then I'll make sure they last a

long

time."

AkumaRider!Todomatsu and Child!Reader

(Inspired by Imogen Heap's 'Hide and Seek'.)

"Anything new?" A bemused huff sounded from the newcomer as he stalked into the Prince's abode, pulling a sneer from the targeted listener while a growl rolled from deep within his chest, "Ah."

"I've never been busier, bastard."

"Calm that tongue, Asmodeus," The speaker's hand reached out and gripped his jaw tightly, immobilizing it and wrenching it upwards to force him to look at them. A violent hiss passed between both of their lips, "You're already on thin ice because of that stunt you pulled days ago."

Asmodeus lowered his brow into a glare, dropping the book that had been the focus of his attention to the floor and shoving the other back. With his jaw free, the dark hues in his eyes burned bright with rage, "I wouldn't be stuck with

you

for a roommate if I hadn't taken that bet."

"If you hadn't," A new voice pushed into the conversation, sounding annoyed at the interaction, "my house would be empty and I'd have a moment of calm to enjoy."

Two fingers snapped against each other, drawing the attention of both men. A third stood tall within the doorway to the room, his lips pulled into a pointed frown while a hand deftly brushed away the fringe covering his left eye.

"Leviathan, stop antagonizing Asmodeus," He looked at the other man, who only responded with a scoff before walking out of the room through another doorway, "I know this current assignment has us all in a bind, but there are only a few more years to suffer. Swallow whatever you call pride and mind your flapping organ before Leviathan tears it from your skull again."

Asmodeus' glare narrowed before he rolled his eyes at the last words, "That wasn't my fault. He just can't take a joke!"

"Having sex with his personal toy isn't a 'joke'."

"She wanted it!" He shouted, growing more irate at the topic, throwing his hands above his head in exasperation before facing the newcomer, "I know my sin, Belphegor! The whore was practically smothered in it."

A loud 'thud' sounded from the room where Leviathan had gone, drawing Belphegor's attention for only a moment before his fingers pulled at his long green sleeved jacket, "That doesn't give you leave to touch someone's contract."

Asmodeus clicked his tongue against his cheek, reclaiming his place on the couch and picking up the book he had been forced to drop, "It's not my fault that I'm being summoned to contracts that don't fulfill me."

Belphegor calmly walked to the bookcase that Asmodeus had been browsing, finding an interesting title and pulling it from the shelf, "You can give the 'boring' ones to lessers."

"And miss out on the drama? Nah," The Prince of Lust stretched out on the couch, bringing the book back up to his face before slamming it down, startling Belphegor, "Oh, fucking come on!"

A bright pink sigil had carved itself onto his chest, the tight black halter top barely hiding his exposed nipples.

"The drama," Belphegor teased, waggling his fingers in the air with flair.

Asmodeus could only flip the Prince off before he was yanked from his comfortable position into the ether, the sigil on his chest changing to a pair of physical shackles hanging around his wrists. His lips curled into a coy smile.

'Short contract, it is.'

He had a short amount of time to alter his appearance, only forfeiting his demonic traits before the summons had pulled him into a genuflecting position with one leg underneath him. There was nothing wrong with the position, but something deep within his chest kept telling him that something was

different

.

Asmodeus remained in the position when his senses settled, a dirty carpet spread out from underneath him to the corners of the room that he could see without moving his head.

Better get this fucking over with...

"You called and I answered. What did you need help with?"

"Ah!" The small cry of surprise was nice to listen to, "Umm...Can you, uhh, help me pack?"

'Fucking, what–'

Asmodeus barely lifted his head to lock eyes with a girl, her own eyes wide before a smile spread across her face. His body went rigid while his mind went blank.

"I can show you," The young girl took his pause as uncertainty, scooting over to a corner of the room, "You just...put this in here...and place it under here...then close the box!"

Asmodeus could only see her back, the child acting out everything beyond his sight. His face fell into an emotionless mask as she spoke, barely shaking his head when she turned back around.

"No...I only get summoned when something

specific

is desired," The Prince of Hell was used to being summoned by exploring teens and preteens, but this child was no more than six years old. His eyes began looking around from the sigil that had been used to bring him here, only finding heavy dust resting on the carpet. Enough of it had collected in the specific shape to activate, his mind noted before lifting his dark gaze back to her, "You don't need this...

'specific'

action."

"Momma says that...every action needs to be paid for," The child continued packing her toys into a large moving box, opening the flaps every time she went to put something in, "She'll get mad if I'm not ready to leave."

"Again, you don't

need my help

," Asmodeus stood up and looked around the room in more detail, his hands resting on his hips while he spoke.

The dirty carpet was the least concerning thing.

Undetermined stains spotted the walls while the ceiling was thick with paint that failed to hide the water spots, remnants of holes that had been created, filled, and reopened dotted the wall right behind the closed door, a rancid odor filled the air that smelled like soured milk that had sat in the summer sun for hours.

"Momma will get mad if I'm not ready before new Daddy comes to take us home."

The situation clicked into place for Asmodeus, a slow breath falling from his nostrils as he folded his arms over his chest.

The child's father had either abandoned his offspring with her mother or had died, leaving the mother to find a new partner. It wasn't a scenario he was a stranger to, but to be summoned by the child was a new one.

"No, sweetie," His voice lifted gently, squatting down near the child who seemingly didn't care about his scant clothing, "I don't think I'll be of much help here."

"Oh, I haven't paid you yet!" The child surprised herself and turned to face him, the tear stains telling a story of their own as they traveled from her eyes to her neck, "I don't have a credit card, but I can pay in whatever you need."

"Darling, I only take one thing for my services and that's souls," Asmodeus huffed with a playful smirk.

"You can have mine!" She laughed before a small ball of light appeared over her chest. Asmodeus cried out in shock and shoved it back into the child, sending the little girl tumbling to the ground with a laugh. She continued to laugh while standing up and straightening out her dress, the Prince of Hell staring at her in confusion with his hands pulled back near his shoulders.

The door opened wide and slammed into the wall hard, causing the girl to flinch as she held her hands over her mouth. Asmodeus calmly watched as a grown woman staggered into the room, her shoulders heavy with a dense red fog that completely smothered her head from his view.

"What were you laughing for, cunt?!" She yelled, teeth gnashing at the child, as the stench of warm booze floated from her breath, "Find something funny?!"

"N-no, Momma..." The child whimpered, wiping the tears of joy from her face and smearing them on the dress.

The woman glared at her, watching the child for a minute more while the tiny thing continued packing the disheveled room, closing the door hard enough to make it miss the latch. While Asmodeus knew he couldn't be seen by those who hadn't summoned him, he grew uncomfortable with what he found himself embroiled in.

He knelt next to the child, helping her quietly until she sat motionless, "You never told me your name, little one."

"Cunt, bitch, piece of shit," The child counted on her fingers, "The others are too difficult to say."

"No, not the names that she calls you," He gently pushed her open hand back to her chest, "The name you call yourself."

"Bad," She smiled up at him. Asmodeus took in a quiet breath before peering into her undeveloped soul, seeing the battered thing beat within her chest. There was no name given to her at birth, meaning that she was unaccounted for within her society.

"May I give you a name?"

"I have so many already."

"No, this one is what I want you to call yourself from now on. No one can take this name away from you," Asmodeus sat next to her, drawing her into his lap while he spoke. She was lighter than he expected, his touch growing more fatherly as his resolve hardened.

"What about the others?"

"Forget them. They don't belong to you anymore," He uttered quietly, like he was telling her a secret, "The only name you have from now on is Lailah."

"That sounds nice."

"And it's all yours," Asmodeus smiled at her, "May I give you a gift? It'll allow you to call me whenever you need me."

"Like a private phone?"

"Exactly like one," He winked playfully as she held out a hand, his index finger scrawling his summon sigil on her tiny palm, gently burning it into her skin so it would grow with her. The child -- now Lailah -- stared at the symbol in wonder.

"Let's finish packing, love," He lifted her onto her feet as the pair began her chore once more.

"Lailah?" Asmodeus called when the summoning pull had finished, glancing around him until a pair of arms wrapped around his waist from behind, drawing his attention to the sobbing preteen leaning on him for support, "I'm here, darling. What's wrong?"

The grown child said nothing, her arms tightening around him a little more before falling away. Asmodeus held her shoulders gently as he turned to face her, leaning down to look at her.

Thick tears had swollen her eyelids, red splotches smothering her cheeks that made it clear how long she had been crying, her bottom lip quivering for a moment before pulling down into another open-mouthed wail as Asmodeus wiped his thumbs over her cheeks as he cradled her head.

"Lailah, I'm here," His instincts fought against themselves as he kept focus on the trembling girl in his arms, "I'm not going anywhere until you're okay."

"She," The fragile human struggled to get a single word out as her body begged for air, "She l-l-left m-me her-re al-one...!"

Asmodeus picked Lailah up carefully and cradled her in his arms, standing tall against the destroyed furniture thrown against the walls and window.

The trembling child in his secure hold bore defensive wounds, scratches and loose hair falling from her head as she clung to him.

"What can I do to help you?"

"J-just...ho-hold m-me..."

Asmodeus' gaze softened as he obeyed her wishes, humming a soft tune that he heard from one of Beelzebub's contracts. He moved from the room with little difficulty, bringing Lailah out to a larger room that had been fully emptied and taking a seat in the middle of the vacant floor, continuing to cradle her while she mourned.

She was his daughter. Nothing would change that.

--Mature-- Beta!Todomatsu x Alpha!Reader

WARNING! This is a mature chapter, and meant for an 18+ audience. If you're younger than that, I respectfully ask that you find something else to read.

If you're older than 18, you may continue at your own discretion.

This story contains gore, explicit description, and violence, along with mentions of bloodplay.

The ten-year high school reunion.

I hated this.

I didn't want to be here, but

he

did...so I came with him.

The cold drink was uncomfortable to hold but my fingers held onto glass despite the condensation, my eyes quickly looking up towards a group of similar-looking men, picking out a certain laugh.

Todomatsu. I was here because of him, practically dragged here until he told me that he didn't want to be here without reassurance.

That

was something I could provide.

The thought swelled my pride as I took in a breath, bringing the cup to my lips and downing the carbonated alcohol before setting the glass down and walking over to him. His lips turned upward in a cat-like grin, casting a condescending glare at the two other girls that had been pressing close as they formed a living wall between him and his five other brothers. Upon my arrival, the young women quickly dispersed.

"Oh!" I could hear the relief in his voice, "Did you finish chatting with your friends?"

"Yep," I lied with a smile, "Just wanted to hang with you for a little bit."

His fingertips were nearly white with tension as he raised his own glass to his lips, swallowing the full cup in nearly one gulp, "You're a lifesaver..."

"No worries, babe," I whispered in his ear, relishing the fact that I had to bend down a little to brush my lips against his earlobe, "You're my mate."

A shudder ran through his body, Todomatsu actively fighting down the blush threatening to consume his skin. I laughed a little as I stood back up, taking his now empty glass.

"That's mean."

"A devil for a demon," I gave him a playful wink as I moved towards the bar, ordering us both nonalcoholic drinks and returning with the flavored seltzer water, "How are your brothers fairing?"

"Like normal," He huffed as he chugged the new drink, a slight pout tugging his bottom lip out, "You're not feeling anything from them?"

"Nothing that I'm interested in," I noticed Todomatsu stepping closer to me, his left hand reaching out and brushing my right thigh where the short skirt revealed skin, "Are you trying to get me to project something?"

"No," Another huff as his hand immediately retreated, but not before he gave me a playful push, "I'll keep the fantasies quiet...for now."

"Well, well. Look who's--" Someone bumped into me hard from behind, a pair of arms wrapping around my waist and pulling me back into them. Their hands didn't wander any further down, but that didn't stop my fangs from flashing in a snarl. I could feel my pupils constrict sharply, angry that someone was touching me without permission, but their dark hues full of anxiety stilled the possessive rage.

"Jyushimatsu, what are you--?" Todomatsu sputtered as I blinked a few times in surprise.

The second youngest brother tucked his head between my arm and back, my hand raising up a little to quiet Todomatsu. I could smell the uncertainty coming from the Matsuno omega, prompting me to look around the crowd, "Jyushi, what do you need?"

"Please...I need to borrow you."

"But--"

"Please!" Jyushimatsu looked up through his dark fringe, the normally out-of-control brother acting like a child hiding from the boogeyman. His voice sounded tense as the whispered shout was directed at me, "Just...act like my alpha for the moment."

Jyushimatsu needed protection.

An omega wanted

my

protection.

"Babe, it's her," Todomatsu's voice lowered in warning, drawing my attention to his glare before I followed his line of sight.

A woman met my gaze over the rim of a glass, the transparent golden liquid shrinking in size as she tilted the cup towards her lips. The aggressive posture she held was hard to ignore, tearing my focus away to face Jyushimatsu.

"Understand that I will do this for you," The words were soft towards the omega, his body visually relaxing under my touch as I cupped his left cheek with a hand, "Todomatsu, know that I am agreeing to this temporarily."

"Do what you need," Todomatsu's hand gave a playful swat to my rear, lingering for only a moment before he stepped away, "I get the leash tonight."

I hummed in heated anticipation before fully focusing on the omega in front of me, "Tell me why she wants you."

"I don't know..." He whimpered, nuzzling his cheek into my hand as his dark eyes lifted to meet mine, "Maybe it's close to my cycle?"

"It's not that--" My lips lowered to his forehead, briefly resting on his skin before I smelled the palpable anger from the other female alpha. A low rumble rolled through my throat as I met the furious glare of emerald, the intruder now only steps away from us. I lifted my upper lip in a growl, "What."

"Aren't you getting a little handsy for an omega that's not yours?" She huffed, crossing her arms over her chest while shifting her weight onto her right leg. I didn't recognize her from my high school classes, wondering briefly if she was one of the classmates that made a dramatic transformation between then and now.

"Aren't you being too pushy for this crowd? Stifle yourself before you set someone off."

"Ooh, alpha's got bite," The woman let her lips fall into a confident smirk while an overwhelming vinegary scent washed off of her in waves, causing a handful of people around us to shirk away in disgust and a few more to look over in growing curiosity, "It's not like they can do much."

"You're just here for a fight and happened to pick my mate as bait," Gently pushing Jyushimatsu behind me, I fully stood up as he pressed himself against my back for protection. I wasn't as large as a male alpha, but I could definitely hold my own against one.

"He's not your mate. He's not even marked."

I released a dark growl, fully showing my enlarged canine fangs in threat, "You're saying that you've undressed my omega enough to see his bare chest?"

"You did

what

to my little brother?" A guttural snarl sounded from my left, the orange-and-ginger scent indicating which sextuplet had stepped into the match.

"You're all talk and no bite. None of you have mates and the fact that you pulled this

girl

into our little scrap is a bit insulting to me, Juicy," She directed her comment to the omega behind me, his form flinching at the nickname, "Come back home with me. You don't need to be at this ridiculous event when you're in your heat."

Karamatsu, who had spoken earlier, moved to take a step closer before I stopped him. A quick glance from him to Jyushimatsu was all he needed to understand what was about to happen, "Please...it's not gentlemanly for a man to hit a woman."

As the woman let out a beginning of a scoff, I twisted on my heel and slammed a closed fist into the side of her jaw.

She staggered back a few feet, colliding with some people before falling down to the floor, her gaze shaken before becoming fierce as she locked eyes with me.

"Alphas, no fighting!" A voice shouted out in warning, presumably the bouncer.

"You fuck with anyone my mate holds dear, you fuck with me!" I shouted, stalking towards her before she scrambled up to her feet, wiping the fresh trail of blood away from her bottom lip, "Get down and grovel for my forgiveness, bitch."

I had seen the first punch coming, deftly shifting out of the way before her foot lodged itself into my stomach, the blow quickly followed by a volley of punches and scratches that slowly made their way up my chest to my hair. When she grabbed a hearty fistful of strands, I latched onto the fist holding me, digging my painted fingernails deep into her skin and introducing blood to the air.

With a pained scream, the other alpha yanked my head backwards in an attempt to pull my fingers out, nearly succeeding in the task before I snagged her braid and pulled her down with me. My back slammed into the floor as cries of shock sounded out around us, the nearby noises drowned out as my heartbeat thundered in my ears. Her knees collided with the ground underneath my waist, her fingers releasing my hair before clenching into a fist, joining the other as they crashed over and over into my face.

Each punch grew more sharp until she was fully scratching at my eyes, nose, mouth, anything that would bleed.

Jerking my entangled hand away, I exposed her throat for only a moment and grabbed at it with my free hand, enduring the blows as red swallowed my vision. My fingers curled around skin damp with sweat and clamped down, drawing a choked sound from the attacker.

"Babe!" I could hear Todomatsu call for me, worry thick in his voice over the pounding in my ears. I had to keep fighting, had to protect my mate.

More words were shouted out. Something about blood.

The other alpha yipped in shock before snarling, something deep digging into my chest and shoulder before my right hip and left thigh warned that something foreign was in them, too.

More shouting. Mere buzzing next to the snarling beast in my head.

I felt my hands become slick with something, the blood from the opening attacks plastered over my eyes as I gave up trying to see where I was hitting.

The aggressive alpha's scent continued to overpower the coppery-iron smell, which meant that she was still in front of me.

I was thrown against a rigid wall, my shirt growing more loose as I slid to the ground, gathering my feet up from underneath me and launching towards the offending smell, biting down on something warm and soft until my mouth was flooded with that familiar coppery-iron taste.

My body ignored the sudden bouts of pain blossoming along my arms and chest -- a stray one calling out from my legs or waist -- to continue the onslaught on the other alpha. I only thought of this woman preying on my mate's family, images of her claiming an unwilling Jyushimatsu, flaunting her victory.

The beast roared in anger inside me and I allowed it to take over.

I would keep my mate's family safe.

Jyushimatsu would be safe.

My omega would be safe.

"That's enough!"

Someone yelled right into my ear, startling me out of the reverie I was living. My jaw clenched tighter, the person grunting as if responding to the action.

"You in there now?" I could hear the strain in their voice, my memory slowly filling in the blanks as I remembered whom the voice belonged to. Slowly looking along the forearm shoved sideways into my jaws, I could only whine apologetically as the eldest alpha sextuplet panted underneath me, "Yeah...there you are."

I struggled to unclench my bottom jaw from him, finally pulling away as strands of blood and saliva oozed down onto his white long-sleeved shirt, "Osomatsu...I'm so sorry..."

He lowered his arm from my face as I leaned down, pressing my forehead into his chest while hiding the frustrated tears starting to fall from my eyes, feeling his hand lightly rub the back of my head for a few strokes, "Hey, you're okay...haven't seen you that pissed in a long time."

I sniffed as I moved away from him, taking in my new surroundings slowly.

Jyushimatsu near a closed metal door with a worried look in his eyes, untouched by the other female.

Todomatsu, his phone in his hands, next to Jyushimatsu as he watched me stare at him before a knowing smirk slipped across his lips.

Karamatsu -- the other Matsuno alpha -- holding an unconscious and bloodied woman to the ground, his angered focus completely on her limp form.

"Sorry..." The apology was directed at whoever could hear it, "I'm not exactly sure what happened."

"You were sexy, that's what," Todomatsu giggled, his phone screen showing some video that had been recorded.

"You both got kicked out of the venue," Osomatsu rolled his eyes, sitting up and scooting a bit away from me, "Kept fighting despite the bouncers trying to pry you both apart."

"More prison time?" I glanced at Jyushimatsu, an apologetic look on my face.

"No, I managed to talk them out of it," The eldest shook his head, "She's a different case, though."

My gaze wandered over towards the unconscious woman, getting up and dusting my knees off before freezing at the canvas of blood my legs had

become. Higher up near my thighs, the remaining shreds of nude tights were hanging on for dear life as patches of skin mimicked their desperation, dried blood clearly marking which ones had happened first. My skirt was completely ruined, the bright pink now dark crimson with only splotches of original colors trying to peek through the bloodbath. Despite the black color of my shirt, the fabric was heavy where it was still intact, the upper chest and left shoulder sections sticking to my forearm and belly while leaving the aforementioned areas exposed to the air.

The nerves in my scalp rippled in pain with each heartbeat, indicating that some hair had been torn free with the patches of skin. The same pain echoed in my bottom lip and right cheek, my tongue swiping across my lips and instantly regretting it as the sting increased sevenfold, the buds of my tongue finding a sizable open divot near the bottom left corner of my mouth. My fingers ached, some fingernails broken and splintered down to the nail bed with a few actively bleeding.

I had forgotten to trim the lengthy nails before the reunion.

In curiosity, my focus switched to Osomatsu who had been getting to his feet while I examined myself.

The only wound on him was the bite I gave.

"You look like shit," I playfully stuck my tongue out, regretting the move as the muscle rested on my wounded lip.

"Check her out," He offered a coy smile as his hands patted down his suit pants, "You think you're rough looking."

"Dare I?"

"She's missing a lot of skin," Karamatsu huffed, my new position revealing that he had been pressing swads of cloth against her open wounds, the splotches of red slowly growing, "Several broken bones and two useless limbs, too."

"Oh, shit," I moved over to him, "Ambulance on their way?"

"Already called," Todomatsu answered, "She was about to rut, which is why she was so aggressive in trying to provoke someone."

Jyushimatsu only nodded as he ducked around Osomatsu on my left, his hands cautiously reaching out to touch my back, "Are...you okay?"

"I'm alive," My voice softened, "What about you? You weren't sent into an early cycle because of us fighting, were you?"

I felt him shake his head against the dry fabric, "...no...just worried for you."

"I told you that my baby would be fine," My mate strutted over, his eyes straying to look at my wounds. I stiffened a little as his tongue quickly swiped over his bottom lip, his gaze lifting to meet mine, "She could kick Satan's ass and still come back ready for more."

"I know...but I still feel guilty for asking you to act as my alpha when it shouldn't have happened."

"I'm happy to be of service, Jyushimatsu," I stepped away from the omega before turning around and offering him a smile, "My mate's family is my family, too."

"Oh my God, just go fuck, Totty!" Karamatsu suddenly shouted, his tone a mixture of disgust and understanding, "We'll see you tomorrow

after

you both clean up...fucking hell..."

I blinked in surprise before shaking my head in disbelief, one of my hands roughly grabbed by Todomatsu. Subtlety was not in his repertoire, my wounded legs easily following his rushed pace back towards our house while his excitement became more and more obvious.

After all, the sight of me covered in blood was more than enough to perk him up.

I laughed softly as he lay underneath me on our bed, his fingers reopening the smaller wounds before drawing a senseless scene of passion on my untouched skin, crying out in ecstasy as I claimed him over and over.

The knife he usually used during sex wasn't needed this time.

A devil for a demon, indeed.

DenkiMystery!Karamatsu, Choromatsu, Ichimatsu x Reader

Inspired by DemisexualKaraKinnie's prompt.

"Akatsuka Village?" I raised an eyebrow as I stopped packing the camera case.

"Yeah," The man sighed as he straightened out his back from leaning over the suitcase on the bed, glancing back at me, "Editor Matsuzo got some info that there's been strange events happening there and he wants to see if it's newsworthy enough."

"Karatsugu, that's on the other side of Japan!" A look of confusion crossed my face, "It's nowhere close enough for The Tokyo Shimbun to publish their stories in the paper."

"There's a small branch in the same prefecture as Akatsuka Village and we're just there to help them out since they're low on staff," Karatsugu finished packing up his suitcase before setting it on the floor, "You're my photographer, (y/n), so I want you to come with me."

"It's not like I have much of a choice," I muttered as I packed my tools away, zipping up the backpack and laying it against his suitcase with both of our clothing packed inside. I barely caught the look he gave me before feeling his arms wrap around my waist and pulling me against him, his chin resting against my shoulder despite our height difference.

"Consider it a vacation from the dangerous places we're normally sent to," His breath caressed my ear, making me laugh a little, "You know that I'd rather you not follow me at all into the dark sides of Tokyo."

"And you know that I promised to always have your back," I pushed against him before stepping out of his arms, "Someone's gotta keep you out of

trouble."

Karatsugu stood to his full height as he ran a hand through his hair, a knowing smile resting on his lips. I grabbed both articles of luggage and dragged them next to the hotel room door, looking at my wristwatch to see that we only had fifteen minutes before our arranged taxi would arrive.

"I hear that Chorosuke has been living in Akatsuka Village for some time."

"Chorosuke? His family moved there?" I held a hand against my right cheek to try and hide the sudden flush in my face before turning to look at Karatsugu, "I wonder if he's still following his father's footsteps in the floristry business."

"From what he wrote, he's thriving," A rustle of paper caught my attention as Karatsugu pulled out a folded letter from his back pocket, "Says that he wished to see you soon to show you his new skills."

"Karatsugu!" I cried out as I rushed towards him, playfully reaching for the letter before falling against him and landing on top of the bed, "You hid that from me?"

"You left it unopened for a few days in the office, so I just opened it for you," He laughed before lowering the letter towards me and wrapping an arm around my back, keeping me on top, "It's not my fault that I get jealous sometimes."

"You're terrible," With the letter finally in my hand, I lowered my head and kissed Karatsugu on the lips, smiling a little when he returned the kiss.

The short flight from Tokyo to Fukuoka was uneventful, thankfully, but the bus ride from Nakagawa was long and hot. From the bus station, Karatsugu and I hailed a taxi to Akatsuka Village, finding out that the taxi driver was from there after a bit of back-and-forth conversation. His name was Ozo Akashika and was pretty chatty with Karatsugu when I didn't offer anything more to whatever they were talking about.

I was too busy looking out at the wilderness as the cityscape faded behind us, watching as nature grew large in scale before the taxi slowed down as it entered the village limits. Something caught my eye within the forest tree line, seeing a distant figure with a box-shaped head looking right at me as the taxi drove past. I couldn't see its eyes, but an unsettling feeling of fear washed over me and made me sink more into the backseat, my hands tightening on the fabric of my pants.

"Welcome to Akatsuka Village," Ozo called out with a smile on his face, pulling the taxi into the small taxi station and stopping the fare tracker. Karatsugu paid in exact change and climbed out of the taxi, thanking the driver as he did. I fished in my pocket for my coin purse and dug out another ¥1500, laying it on the change tray before getting out. I figured that he'd need an extra boost after dealing with Karatsugu and his endless conversation, offering a small smile of condolence.

Closing the taxi's trunk, Karatsugu offered me the backpack before looking at the area map. I quickly slung the pack over my shoulder and put away my coin purse, looking around the area as the taxi drove off.

It was pretty quiet in the village but there was something strange underneath all of the silence, as if it was holding its breath for something to happen or waiting for some unseen tension to break. With the evening sun shining down through the surrounding forest, my stomach made its protests known.

"I'm guessing you're hungry," Karatsugu laughed a little, apparently finding what he needed from the map before moving off while I trailed behind.

"Only a little bit...I hadn't eaten since this morning at the hotel," I partially pouted. He reached back and held my hand, giving it a gentle squeeze before letting go.

"We'll check in at the hotel and then find something for you to eat."

With the check-in resolving quickly, we asked the desk clerk if there were any notable places to eat nearby and were directed to a corner cafe called 'New York'. We thanked him for the information and made our way there

with the given directions, passing a long line of stores that were starting to close up. I withheld a shout as I recognized one of the store owners who was locking his door, picking up my pace and tapping him on the shoulder.

The man barely glanced down at me, almost the same height as Karatsugu. His dark hair was slicked down into a neat part, not a single stray hair standing up, while the green yukata he was wearing was perfectly arranged.

"Sorry, but we just closed."

"Then maybe you can show me your new skills tomorrow?" I raised a playful eyebrow, "After all, Chorosuke, it's been almost five years."

"(Y/n)...?" His eyes widened a little before looking behind me, the corner of his lips twitching upwards, "Karatsugu."

"I heard that," Karatsugu commented behind me, sounding like a parent scolding their whispering child.

"Tch," He glanced to the side, fully locking the front door to his store before turning back to me, "You should've warned me that you were coming. I would have prepared a room for you in my house."

"And me?"

"You have money for a hotel, don't you?" Chorosuke commented without emotion while lightly taking my hand, looking back down at me with a pointed smile resting on his lips, "What brings you to Akatsuka Village?"

"Hey!"

"Work, actually," I answered the question before looking back at Karatsugu with an apologetic look. The two men had always been like this, competing for my attention despite there being plenty to go around, "Karatsugu and I have been assigned here to help out with one of the local branches."

"There's not much to really report on here," Chorosuke gave an apologetic smile to me, "Are you sure that it wasn't just an excuse for that idiot to drag you here for some time off?"

"If it was for vacation, I would've chosen somewhere on Hokkaido, thank you very much," Karatsugu moved up to flank my other side, our hands briefly meeting before he pulled away.

"Uh-huh," Chorosuke gave him an emotionless stare over my head, "I was just about to have a light meal at Cafe New York, if you'd like to join me, (y/n)."

"Sure," I nodded, "That's where we were going for food actually."

"It's an excellent place. The manager on this current shift is nice and the food he makes is very tasty, too," Chorosuke gripped my hand a little tighter, picking up the pace and almost leaving Karatsugu in the dust, "I'll pay for your food.

He

can pay for his."

A whore. A harlot. A succubus.

I'd been called those names and worse during the last seven years, yet the looks that I'd received from those that didn't understand my relationships were enough to get upset over. I had been shy when I started forming a relationship with three different men at the same time, but they had been supportive, despite what society had tried telling us about polyamory.

I was getting those same looks now by a few of the customers, proudly taking a seat next to Chorosuke while Karatsugu sat across from us, both of the men completely ignoring the slack stares they were getting. I swallowed a laugh when I could imagine the onlookers' reactions if the third man, Hajima, was with us.

"How long will the job keep you in town for?" Chorosuke asked while our plates were being cleared, all of our stomachs full.

"It shouldn't be for very long," Karatsugu cleared his throat after finishing his bubbly drink, "Maybe two weeks or so. Just long enough to gather some

info and report back to the branch."

"Do you know of anything weird or story-worthy happening around the area?" I tilted my head up towards Chorosuke.

"Not that I can think of, but there is a festival happening in a few days out by the shrine in the forest," He held his curled hand against his chin before returning the look back at me, "That may still be a fun thing to check out."

"You know how (y/n) gets around festivals," Karatsugu rested his chin on a propped up hand, glancing over at me.

"It's not

my

fault that I want to enjoy them," I stuck my tongue out at him, "Festivals are meant to bring people together and enjoy a unified emotion."

"It's also where you spend too much money on food and booze, only to complain up and down the wall about how much you regret not being able to afford anything afterwards," He leveled a hooded glare back at me, "Don't try to spin this against me, (y/n). I've been dating you the longest."

"By a week," Chorosuke muttered as he tucked his arms into the sleeves of his green yukata, "This festival only happens every five years, so it's best if you want to experience it. Maybe you'll find something to write about."

Karatsugu met my widening smile with an equally unenthusiastic glare before rolling his eyes, "Fine. She's going home with you, Choro, so I don't have to hear the complaining."

"Sounds fine with me. I'll make up for the five year gap in just one night," Chorosuke lowered his eyelids and his smile turned even more pointed, as if taunting the other man.

"Wait...if it only happens once every five years, then do you think Hajime is gonna stop by?" I tapped my fingers against the table, not noticing the other

two men completely freeze up, "He's such a history buff that it would definitely pique his interest."

"It's possible..."

"Oh, that'd be a good date in my book," I smiled towards the other two men before noticing the defeated looks on their faces, "Guys...?"

"There's a chance that Hajime may not even know about this festival," Chorosuke slowly shook his head, "It's a local festival that's meant to honor the spirits that live in the forest."

"Well, there's a few days left until it starts. I don't have his number since he changed it, but you never know."

Karatsugu straightened out his shirt before moving out of the booth, grabbing the checks from the table and heading towards the register without saying anything. My face fell slightly in sadness at the reaction, hoping that the wounds from two years ago would've healed over by now.

"I'm guessing something happened, then," Chorosuke rested his forearms on the table, looking down at me after watching Karatsugu leave.

"Yeah...There was a pretty big disagreement between them two years ago. Apparently, Hajime found something about Karatsugu's family's past and wanted to either know more about it or rectify it. It caused a rift to open between the two of them and I don't think they'd even tolerate being within twenty feet of each other if I wasn't in the picture," I crossed my arms over the table and buried my face into them, "I've tried talking to them about what happened, but they're completely hush-hush about it. Hajime changed his number shortly after that and has only stopped by my apartment when Karatsugu was away on business."

Chorosuke gave a deep sigh before resting a hand on my back, "At least they're still with you. I know that I'm not in the best position to help you, since I have to run my father's shop and take care of my little sister...but I'm more than happy to be an ear for you if you ever need to talk about anything."

He shifted his hand up to my head, his fingers running through my hair as I turned to face him.

"Thanks, Chorosuke..."

"Everything's all paid for," Karatsugu called out as he walked back to the table, "I'm actually pretty exhausted from today, so I'm going to head back to the hotel. (Y/n), if you want to stay with Chorosuke for a little longer, go ahead. I know you've got catching up to do."

"Karatsugu, wait...!" I quickly stood up from the table, Chorosuke's hand slipping from my hair, "I'm sorry."

A knowing look crossed his face, a small smile spreading over his lips before giving a partial dismissal wave of his hand, "I'll see you in the morning, (y/n)."

A soft pang in my chest hurt as I watched Karatsugu walk out of the cafe and into the night, heading towards the hotel.

Once more, I had hurt a man I loved by being careless with my words.

"Come on, (y/n)," Chorosuke gently took my hand and walked me out of the cafe, his footsteps slow to accommodate my distracted walk, "I'm sure that he won't hold it against you."

"But..." I looked up towards him, seeing his partially slicked back hair and small bags underneath his eyes in more detail than before.

"You know that he just needs a little space to organize his thoughts. Once the morning comes, I'll bring you to the shop and show you what I've been up to, okay?"

After a moment of thought, I gave him a nod.

Karatsugu had met Chorosuke and I at the flower arrangement shop, walking in almost thirty minutes after the store opened. He seemed more

refreshed than last night, his eyes holding their regular playfulness when we made eye contact. Chorosuke had finished presenting a new flower layout as Karatsugu sat on the cushion next to me, entering the shop in silence and watching what the other man was doing.

"That looks wonderful," He gave the other man a nod after Chorosuke was in a resting position, "I'm sure that your father would've been very proud."

"I've still got a long way to go before I can call myself an Ikebana master like him," Chorosuke laughed a little, pushing the arrangement to me, "This is actually for you. It'll keep fresh for a few more days, so you can offer it to the spirits at the festival tomorrow."

"Oh, Chorosuke..." I gave a small bow of appreciation, sliding the arrangement closer towards me without disturbing the flowers much, "I'd be honored to present your talent to them."

"If we're going to be attending the festival, then we'd need kimonos," Karatsugu leaned back a little, "Know of any place that can do rentals?"

"You're able to borrow one of my own, Karatsugu, but there's a small shop nearby that does kimono rentals if you're not happy with that," Chorosuke stood up and moved towards the register, opening one of the table's drawers and rifling through a few sheets of paper before pulling out a pamphlet. He walked back towards us and held it out, letting me take it from his hand and look at the 'NOW OPEN' announcement written all over it.

The store was advertising kimono rentals for men and women, as well as wrapping services for those wanting to purchase a kimono from them.

"I can cover my own if you want to borrow one. They do seem a little on the expensive side for rentals, but what can you do when they're the only place in town," I handed the pamphlet over to Karatsugu, letting him read the info before making further plans.

"Yeah...I'll take you up on your offer, Chorosuke," Karatsugu gave a small nod, laying the paper down on the table.

"Sounds like a plan. The mayor's son is in charge of organizing the festival, so the shrine will be completely blocked off today in preparation for tomorrow," Chorosuke took the paper back, "If you're looking for some story to write about, that may be your chance."

"I actually got a call from the boss this morning, asking for me to head to their local branch and gather what info I can for the story," Karatsugu stood up before holding out a hand to help me up, "It sounds like the perfect time for you to take some pictures of the festival being set up."

"You're letting me go solo here?" I partially raised an eyebrow after standing up and adjusting my clothing, "You rarely let that happen."

"We're pretty far from anything dangerous, I think. I trust you to keep yourself safe."

"All right, I guess," I turned to Chorosuke, "Would I be able to keep that here for the day? I'll pick it up tomorrow."

"Of course," He gave me a small smile, "I'll reserve it for you. Good luck at work and be cautious around Toshio Ogami. He may be the organizer, but he's an odd one."

"I'll keep that in mind," I stood on my toes and gave Chorosuke a light kiss on the lips, "I hope that you stay busy."

Following Karatsugu out of the store and waving goodbye to Chorosuke, I headed towards the hotel to gather my gear and press pass while Karatsugu turned towards the taxi station. Mentally going through my checklist, I dug through the backpack to make sure that nothing was broken or shattered before shouldering it. Locking the room behind me, I asked the front clerk for directions towards the shrine and started on my way, finding the torii gate partially buried in the treeline of the forest.

The stone stairs slowly ascended through the forest, curling around towards a plateau with another torii before the top of the shrine could be seen.

The shrine itself was smaller than the ones in the larger cities, though still quite impressive despite the smaller scale. A small pavilion stood to the left of the entry, containing a basin used in purification for the worshippers that came here, the water quietly lapping at the sides of the basin. I made my way towards the basin and performed the purification rite, not wanting to make the spirits mad at me. The path towards the shrine was partially sectioned off for vendors to sell their wares, the booths already being set up by some of the volunteers.

Making sure that my press pass was fully visible, I began to take some pictures of the set up, staying well out of their way and using a zooming lens to capture what I thought would make a good picture.

"...no outsiders."

A dark voice nearly whispered in my ear, making me jump in shock before turning to face a wide-eyed man.

The bus ride was unbearable, the partially opened windows doing nothing against the heat that drew beads of sweat against his skin. An eyebrow twitching in annoyance, he opened the top button of his shirt and tugged at the fabric to try and fan himself a little.

Pulling out his cell phone for the tenth time that day, he deftly opened the flip phone and dialed in a number from memory, growing more agitated when the line immediately clicked over to her voicemail. Part of him worried that he wouldn't make it in time to drag her back to the safety of Tokyo, but most of him was focused on the burning anger towards the journalist that knowingly brought her into a deadly trap.

Karatsugu sighed as he climbed into the backseat of the taxi, finally managing to flag one down after a little while of waiting on the curb.

"Akatsuka Village, please."

"Your lady friend not with you today?" The driver adjusted the rearview mirror and caught Karatsugu's eye. It was Ozo, the same driver from before.

"Ah, no. She's back in the village, taking some set up pictures of the festival that's happening tomorrow," Karatsugu gave a lazy wave of his hand in front of his face, "Since this was a short hop, I figured I'd tackle two birds with one stone."

"An outsider on the festival grounds, huh?" The tone in Ozo's voice turned a little dark, "I wonder how he'll take it."

"Who will?"

"Tobio."

"You say that name like I should know it," Karatsugu raised an eyebrow in caution, slightly turning his head to the side while maintaining eye contact with the driver.

"Ah, that's right. You're not from around here," Ozo tapped his index finger on the wheel before pulling into traffic, "Tobio is the mayor's son, and he's really picky about who can attend the festival. He's made it pretty clear that he hates outsiders."

"I'll keep that in mind..."

"It's none of my business, at the end of it all," The driver moved the vehicle onto the road that stretched on to Akatsuka Village. Karatsugu rested his mouth against his palm, looking out towards the growing forest as the car rolled on.

The droning of the quiet radio filled the silence until Karatsugu had enough motivation to speak again.

"You had mentioned earlier that it was like I was coming back home," He didn't miss the slight smirk that Ozo suddenly had on his face, "I didn't press because I had company, but what exactly did you mean by that?"

"Fate has a way of correcting what was torn apart forcefully," Ozo looked back towards him, "Have you not questioned why we look alike?"

My head throbbed as I opened my eyes to see darkness all around me, stale air hitting my nose and almost making me cough. There was an unnatural stillness to the air and I couldn't feel the familiar weight of my camera around my neck, hoping that it wasn't damaged. Another breath confirmed that I had something stuffed into my mouth, tied around my head tightly so I couldn't peel it off. Shifting my arms and legs let me know that I had been bound up, almost like I was someone's prisoner.

I let out a muffled cry to try and grab a passerby's attention, but I couldn't even hear the street from wherever I was.

And here I thought this was going to be a break from the threat of the ordinary...

Tightening my jaw around whatever was serving as my gag, I worked my tongue and lips around the fabric to try and feel out any weakened points where I could remove it without my hands.

No luck. Whatever the fabric was held on pretty tightly to itself.

I stilled as I felt a drop of water hit my face, shaking my head a little before I felt another drop fall from the same area. Rolling away from the water droplets, I tried to feel for what kind of surface I was laying on. A cold stone surface extended out from every direction, the temperature dropping little by little as the water continued to drip.

With no light to operate by, I stretched out my body to try and get a measure of how big this place was. It was more than my height in either direction, my bound ankles preventing me from standing up to figure out the space's height.

Trying to not make any loud sounds, I rolled my shoulders and stretched them as far as the joints would allow, twisting my arms underneath my

bound legs and exhaling when my knees pressed against my chest. With a final push, my arms were in front of me. Tugging the gag free from my mouth, the cheesecloth texture abrasive against my skin, I reached out and felt the walls near me.

The same cold stony surface that the floor was made of.

"Damn...storeroom."

The older cold storerooms were usually installed underground, safe from the fluctuating heat of the sun but shallow enough that the rain would cool the stone during rainfall.

My fingers traveled over the stone, pushing and pulling at every seam that I could feel. My pants were starting to feel partially soaked, the dripping water starting to intensify as the temperature began to drop in the cold storeroom. Catching a nail along something near the top of the area, I pushed against the crack before crying out when a thick stream of water slipped through the crack. Faint light poured through the water, the light muddled by the runoff as it gathered up to the top of my kneecaps as I knelt against the ground.

"Hey...!" I shouted as loud as I could, standing up in an awkward position and shoving my shoulder against the crack, "Anyone out there?!"

The second shove sent more water cascading on top of me, the dirt clinging to my skin and clothes while I tried to create a large enough opening to escape from. The crack widened into an outline of a slab, sending more water on top of me before I could push the slab past the dirt barrier. Crawling out from the storeroom like an undead creature, I pulled myself onto the soaked ground with my bound hands working in tandem with my bound legs, the torrent of rain coming down with such force that I could've sworn it was a tsunami. My hair came loose from its bindings as I finally pulled myself up completely from the store room, giving me a chance to breathe without fear of drowning.

The wrist binds were hard to loosen, feeling like the same kind of cheesecloth fabric that had served as my gag, but I was able to loosen it

eventually as my body was pelted with rain. With my wrists freed, it was much easier to undo my legs.

Staggering to my feet by a sudden burst of energy, I looked around where I was to try and find familiar ground. I didn't recognize anything. There were old stone statues covered in moss towards my right, six glaring monstrous faces that seemed to stare out at nothing. It didn't appear to be attached to the shrine I was at previously.

"Anyone out there?!" I called out again through the downpour, stumbling forward as I thought I heard someone call out my name in the distance. Taking another step towards the shout, my legs remembered how to walk and I slowly picked up the pace, responding to each call with 'here' as loud as I could muster.

Rounding a tree, I saw two men standing in the rain with umbrellas, a hand cupped around their mouth like a makeshift loudspeaker.

"Hajime...! Chorosuke!" My voice broke as I fell into Chorosuke's free arm, clinging to his damp yukata like a lifeline, "I don't know what happened...!"

"(Y/n), we thought you had been spirited away!" Chorosuke cried out as he shifted his free arm to wrap around me as much as he could, leaning down and almost smothering me.

"Guys...I wasn't gone for that long," I tried to laugh, not wanting to feel this somber mood anymore. Another arm wrapped around my upper chest, now fully pinned between Hajime and Chorosuke.

"(Y/n)...how long do you think it was?" His normally gravelly voice sounded tired.

"I don't know...a few hours?" I looked back up towards him, feeling his thumb push some hair out of my face.

"...it's been three weeks."

Undertale!Brothers and Reader

Inspired by Pippa Frost's Inktober 2016

I closed my eyes as I leaned my head against the wall behind me, hearing the fragile jars barely clink against each other from my slight movement. The jars, each wrapped up carefully and packed away inside my backpack, were more important to me than my own life. They contained the six brilliantly colored hearts of my best friends, a family of identical sextuplets, and they'd been handed to me for safe keeping a few months ago.

Something had scared them into removing the delicate pieces, and I promised to keep them safe with me. During the years that I had known the brothers, nothing seemed to really shake them...except for the briefest of glimpses of a certain shadow from their past. I had accepted their hearts without hesitation, watching them leave as they began to erase themselves from any kind of record.

For all intents and purposes, they were ghosts to those outside of the family.

I let my head drop softly onto the top of the backpack, the bag close to my chest as I hugged it for comfort.

The Matsuno family, the six identical brothers -- I was worried about them. As long as I was in possession of their hearts, they wouldn't suffer from most physical injuries. I could heal them, and that's why I didn't hesitate taking them but also knew that it would make me a big target.

The eldest brother made me promise to always be on the run and never settle in one place for very long. I was given the youngest's cell number, so I was able to update them on where I was. The urgency in his voice was scary, even more frightening than when he was mad at his troublesome brothers. I saw the hearts for the first time in his arms as he practically shoved them into my own during the conversation, the hunted look in his

eyes obvious. After finding suitable containers for them, there was nothing else I could do but to ensure that they stayed out of sight.

I stilled as I heard a snap from the nearby woods, hoping that it was just an animal passing by. I strained to hear any more movement, holding my breath for as long as I could, my own heartbeat thundering in my ears.

Another crunch of leaves.

Much closer than before with no steps between. Two legs...

Human.

I gritted my teeth and launched from my sitting position, clutching the backpack tightly as I bolted away from the noise and into the growing dark of the late evening. I could only guess at who it was, but I was certain that it wasn't one of the brothers. They had always alerted me if one came to visit.

This person was more than likely hunting me.

I darted between the trees that surrounded the crumbling house that I was hiding in, my poor night vision aided by the full moon starting to rise in the black sky. My panting was masking any sounds behind me, but the only thing I could do was run forward. There was no opportunity for me to warn the brothers of what was happening, not wanting to risk the cell phone backlight giving away my position to whoever was chasing me.

I felt my hair yank back, ripping some strands out and forcing my head to tilt upwards, the forward momentum of my run rendered useless as I was thrown to the ground by my own body weight.

"So, that's what they've been hiding--" A scratchy male voice laughed as the person tried to wrestle the backpack out of my grip. I refused to let go, clutching the zippers in my right hand with both arms hugging the sack like a death grip, "Stubborn brat!"

I felt his hand cover my mouth and I bit down on instinct, drawing out a yell from him. His touch recoiled from me and I took the opportunity to roll

away and start running again. Quickly digging out my phone from an open pocket in the backpack, I sent my location to the phone the brothers used, hoping that they were close enough to help. I felt a heavy hand on my right shoulder before being shoved into a tree, arching my back to an extreme degree so the jars didn't break from the collision.

"I know you have them," The moonlight revealed the man's face as he pinned my head to the tree with a hand, my left eye able to see him clearly. His graying black hair was kept in an extreme part, part of his bangs roughed up from chasing after me. His dark eyes narrowed as I locked my colored gaze at him, both of us engaging in a glaring contest before he gripped my head tightly, pulling it off the tree and smashing me back into the rough bark, "You're going to give them to me."

"...No way in hell!" I coughed out a reply, my grip tightening even more as my knuckles turned white with tension. His frown shifted into a cruel grin.

"The hard way is fine by me."

My hair was roughly pulled at, dragging me away from the tree before his grip suddenly shifted back onto my head and slammed it against the tree again. White flooded my eyes and pain lanced through my face and brain, barely registering the backpack being ripped from my limp arms. My vision shifted to looking up at the man, my thoughts finally warning me that I was at the brink of consciousness.

"Finally...which one, which one is it...?" He tore open the backpack, breaking the zipper and dragging out jar after jar; first a pink one, then a blue one...

My eyes slightly widened.

He couldn't see the colors!

They were probably all colored gray to him and, as he dug through each wrapped jar, the theory was confirmed when he turned to me with a snarl.

"Tell me which one is his!" In his hands was the yellow jar: Jyushimatsu's heart. I carefully propped myself up on my elbows, trying to sit up after the beating he gave me.

"They're all gray to me..." I lied, a frown on my face as I tried to convince myself that I was telling the truth. I had made it to a crouching position before I saw the dagger in his free hand, the blade racing towards the yellow heart. Pain blossomed in my forearm as I intercepted the dagger, quickly rushing forward with an arm outstretched.

I screamed in agony, stumbling over the cast aside jars around the man and falling back to the ground with his dagger wedged deep in my right forearm. He clicked his tongue and dropped the jar in his hand, moving towards me.

"If they're in your care, then you can see them," His foot nudged the pink jar away from me, "Now...tell me which one is Osomatsu's."

I resisted the urge to glance at the red heart by my feet, forcing myself to look to my right and stare at nothing. The man's scowl deepened and his hand swiftly pulled the dagger out of my arm, causing me to scream and clutch at the wound to keep myself from bleeding out. He reached down to the jar by my feet, wrenching the lid open and grabbing the heart inside.

"No...not that one!" I tried to grab the red heart, only to be shoved back and pushed to the ground. His grip tightened on the fluttering thing, not hard enough to crush it, but enough to make the owner aware of his presence.

"Osomatsu, you'll come to the grove behind the girl's hiding spot, and send your brothers home..." The man smirked as he whispered the orders to the red heart. The pain of defeat grew in my chest, tears threatening to fall down my cheeks while I spotted the other hearts nearby. They were scattered around the two of us, with the green one being the closest to me.

I locked eyes with the unknown man, but he was watching me closely like I was his prey. I knew that I had the ability to heal damage done to hearts, and the only exposed heart right now was Osomatsu's...I was torn between taking a chance and remaining helpless.

I didn't have time.

"Leave them alone!" With a surge of adrenaline, I let go of my wounded forearm and launched towards the man, my left hand reaching up as he lifted Osomatsu's heart high. His other hand pressed against my face, forcing me back to the ground after my rush pushed him a little.

"Insolent bitch!" The man snarled as he kicked at me, "You're becoming more trouble than you're worth! I should just rip out

your

heart and force you to obey me!"

I couldn't spit out a retort before his strength overwhelmed my adrenaline-fueled rush, my body weakening again as I was pinned underneath the man. His hand hovered over my chest, slowly pulling upwards as I screamed in pain. I could feel my own heart start to shift towards the man's hand, forced to push through my chest as the intense pain locked my body up. The rustling of leaves drew his attention away from me, the colored heart starting to slip back into my chest from its small breech and giving me a small moment of reprieve.

"Ah, you're here," The man stood up fully and gave a sly smile. I winced as I looked over to see Osomatsu, his chest heaving as if he had been running for some distance and his wide eyes locked onto me before narrowing towards the man, "You were a lot closer that I estimated."

Osomatsu didn't reply, only maintaining the deadly glare.

"Oh, that's right...You need my permission to speak. Go ahead," The man sounded arrogant as he gave Osomatsu permission to speak freely, the red heart still in his hands.

"What do you want from me, Tougou?" The fury laced in Osomatsu's voice gave me chills, feeling the anger roll off of him.

"I just wanted to repay you back for the humiliation all those years ago, but now that

she

got in the way..." The man motioned towards me, "I'm thinking of adding an addendum to that."

"Your quarrel is with me, not her."

"That's why it's called an addendum, dear Osomatsu," Tougou drew the knife from where he had put it, offering the handle to Osomatsu as he brought the red heart up to eye level, "Grab the knife."

"Oso, don't!" I struggled to get up, my body crying out for rest as I watched in horror as Osomatsu took the knife from Tougou's hand, not putting up an inch of resistance.

He

couldn't

fight back...not as long as Tougou has his heart!

My eyes snapped to Tougou, now weaponless as he focused on Osomatsu.

"Go to the nearest jar and open it," Another order that Osomatsu followed, picking up the purple jar and breaking the seal on the lid.

"Take the heart out and--"

I didn't let Tougou finish his command, shoving his foot off of my stomach and swinging wide with my leg in a sweeping motion, catching the man completely off-guard. He fell onto his back and I instantly pounced on his hand holding Osomatsu's heart, prying it free and clutching the fluttering warm object close to my chest as I ran towards Osomatsu.

"(Y/n)!" The control on him now broken, Osomatsu reached out to me and corralled me behind him, shoving the purple jar into my arms in the same

motion. I focused on Osomatsu's heart, pressing it against my lips as I felt my own ability start to transfer to him, healing any kind of damage that was done previously to his body since the last time I healed it.

"No...!" I heard Tougou yell out in anger, shortly followed by a choking sound and both men began to fight each other. Chancing a glance back, I saw Osomatsu on top of Tougou struggling to shove the knife down, the point aimed at the older man's chest. Picking up the discarded backpack, I quickly tucked the purple jar and Osomatsu's heart into it, rushing around the area to gather the rest of the scattered jars.

I wasn't going to let Tougou have a chance to affect another brother.

I huddled behind a tree with the torn backpack, holding Osomatsu's heart close and pouring everything I could into it. Slowly, the noises of the fight died down, leaving the grove in silence, with only the sound of someone panting heavily growing louder. With the bright red heart in my hands still showing signs of life, I knew who it was without looking.

"...(y/n)...where are you?" I heard shuffling heading away from me.

"Over here," I moved to extend my right arm from behind the tree, but cried out as the stab wound painfully reminded me that it was still there. Catching a small glimpse in the moonlight, I pressed my other hand against the wound tightly to keep the blood flow to a minimum.

"You're hurt," He knelt next to me, gently taking the injured forearm and looking at it closely, "And pretty badly, it seems...We need to get you medical attention."

"But what about...?"

"It doesn't matter anymore," He lifted me up in his arms with such ease that I thought I was as light as a feather to him. Tucking his arms underneath my knees and supporting my shoulders, he began to make his way through the grove, "You have pressing needs, and I know that ignoring them would only make my brothers worry more."

"Am I able to stay with you all again...?"

Osomatsu looked down at me, the neutral look in his eyes morphing into a playful look, "Only if you want to look at six same faces."

I felt myself grow tired, not realizing how much stress my body had undertaken in just a few months, yawning as I smiled up at the eldest.

"I wouldn't mind that..."

Brothers x Amnesiac!Reader

Inspired by AliceWoodsWriter's prompt.

His heart pounded within his chest, his breath becoming labored as his legs tried to keep up with his demands, the sound of footfalls behind him starting to trail back. Panic drove him forward, words that he never thought they would ever hear echoing in his head.

"I need you here, Osomatsu...please...it's (y/n)...!" The second oldest choked out as the receiver fell out of Osomatsu's hand. The phone number was familiar, but he couldn't place where he'd seen it before until he heard Karamatsu whimper out her name.

Akatsuka Ward Hospital.

It was a few miles away, but he couldn't waste time trying to hail a cab and risking traffic. His younger brothers followed him out while calling for Osomatsu to slow down, but he didn't care.

The only time he stopped to catch his breath was when he was intercepted by Karamatsu in the waiting lobby, the leather-wearing brother bringing him in close and digging his face into Osomatsu's pajama-covered chest to smother the tearful sobs. The eldest slowed his breathing as much as he could before gently pushing Karamatsu just enough to look at him.

"What happened."

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He was gonna tell her today, Karamatsu told himself. Despite the multitude of previous failures, he had a feeling that today was gonna be special. He knew that his brothers would hate him even more, especially since (y/n) was friends with all of them...but he wanted to be hers, his own Karamatsu Girl.

Their perfect date was all planned out: he'd ask her in the early afternoon when she usually woke up, they'd go to lunch at a food truck in the park, spend however long she wanted there, he'd take her to a movie (if there was time) and then to dinner. Then he'd ask her to be his girlfriend.

Karamatsu knew that he and his brothers felt the same about (y/n), treating her as the little sister that they never had, but he was fairly certain that they all wanted to be in a deeper relationship with her.

He was gonna be the first to act on it, though.

"Kara!" A familiar cheery voice called out in surprise, "I didn't think I'd see you this early."

He stirred from his thoughts to see the smiling form of (y/n), two bags full of groceries in her arms as she walked over to him. The shirt she was wearing complimented her eyes and the long skirt's neutral color didn't distract the eyes at all. She always said that she was never going to be a fashion model, but each outfit she wore seemed to rebuff her denial.

"(Y/n)! What a surprise!" Subtly straightening out his leather jacket, he reached out and grabbed the bags from her, "I can carry those for you."

"Thanks...they were getting a little heavy," Her laugh was light and airy, making Karamatsu's heart do somersaults, "I thought you guys usually sleep until after noon?"

"I, uh, had a lot on my mind. Some of which involved you," He swallowed hard and took a chance.

(Y/n) turned to face him with her right eyebrow raised, "Me?"

"Yeah...I..." Karamatsu could feel the nervous sweat start to pour down his face, "I was wondering if you're going to shop more? I'm a pretty strong guy, so I don't mind doing the heavy lifting."

He screamed at himself internally.

"It's not Totoko's date, is it?" She reached into the small belt bag hanging off her waist and opened her flip phone, "No...that's not scheduled for another week. Well, if you have time, then I could really use the help!"

Bright side: they were spending time together after all.

"Let's stop by my place first to put the groceries away," She started to walk down the sidewalk, away from the city center and towards a residential area, "After that, I'll grab the rest of my list and we can put you to some use."

The wink (y/n) sent him happy chills down his spine and Karamatsu reveled in the feeling, following her until they made it to her apartment.

She took the bags from him and quickly put the contents away as Karamatsu stood in the entryway. The unspoken rule between the brothers was to never enter (y/n)'s abode unless given permission to, and each brother followed it.

"So, with you being up around this time, do you have anything that you need to get done?" (Y/n) washed her hands after she tucked the groceries away, "Helping me out is all fine, but if we can knock out what you need to do, too, that'd make the day much better!"

"Oh, yeah," Karamatsu looked towards the front door, "I was thinking of grabbing the new edition of Men's Fashion magazine, but that's it...no plans."

"Are you sure...?" The softness of her voice startled him, making Karamatsu look back towards her and meeting her colored eyes that held a worried look.

Silence filled the air between them and the nervous sweating came back tenfold before Karamatsu frantically nodded his head.

"Yeah, promise! That's it."

"All right, then let's get your magazine first. I'll pay, like usual," She grabbed her apartment keys as she walked by the kitchen counter, fiddling with the key ring before singling out a silver key. Karamatsu walked out of the apartment first, holding the door open until she was ready to lock the door. (Y/n) led the way down the staircase to the ground floor, her arms swinging a little wider as she began to hum a tune to fill the silence. Karamatsu didn't recognize it but listened closely, picking out the notes and memorizing them to play later on his guitar.

"It's just your usual stop, right?" She waited by the crosswalk with other people who were gathering, Karamatsu staying a step behind to prevent crowding her in the morning foot traffic.

"Yeah, just the corner store is good."

"Watch out!" Screams erupted around them as people ran from the crosswalk, tires screeching closer and closer.

Karamatsu grew horrified as (y/n) disappeared in the length of a blink, a strong gust of wind hitting his body as a large vehicle passed within two feet of him before her left slip-on shoe fell to the ground. More screams of panicked people reverberated in his ears, unsure if he was one of them as a moving truck collided with a building nearby. Karamatsu started to move towards the truck before he saw (y/n) sprawled on the concrete, red beginning to encircle her head.

////

The brothers could only stare at him, standing in a semi-circle around the second-eldest as he sat in a chair, slumped over. He always had bad luck, but none of them ever imagined it would affect--

"Do you need to go home?" Osomatsu swallowed a large lump in his throat, the tension making it uncomfortable to speak. He had to be steady, to be the dependable older brother while the others had their breakdowns.

"I...I don't want to leave her here alone..." Karamatsu shook his head, lifting his gaze from the floor to lock eyes with Osomatsu, equally as strong as the

eldest.

"When will they know if she's okay...?" Choromatsu sat down heavily next to Karamatsu, his nerves completely shot from being woken in a panic.

"They rushed her in when the ambulance brought her here. I don't remember when that was," Karamatsu supported the leaning Choromatsu as the third-eldest rested his head on his shoulder, "You guys can probably go home to change..."

"No, I'm staying here," Ichimatsu clenched his fists, the circles under his eyes having grown significantly since Karamatsu told his recollection.

"Same," The youngest, Todomatsu, sat on the opposite side of Karamatsu, leaning into the seat and pulling out his phone to pass the time.

"Then I'll grab what we need from home. I'll be as quick as I can," Osomatsu tried to give a reassuring smile, but couldn't find the heart to make it genuine. Turning on his heel, he bit down on his bottom lip as he walked through the automatic doors, briskly walking back to their home.

This was too sudden

.

They had just seen (y/n) yesterday! She watched as the brothers played mahjong, and even joined in when they became too rowdy. This wasn't fair!

Grabbing a change of clothes for each of his brothers, Osomatsu ignored the questions his mom tried to ask, his mind reeling with anger and sadness: anger towards Karamatsu at trying to cut in front of him for (y/n)'s attention and sadness that Karamatsu had to witness what he did. Osomatsu took a deep breath, realizing that Karamatsu needed the mental break more than he'd ever admit to. Grabbing the beaten up guitar case with his free hand, he told his mom where he was headed and left without another word.

Three hours.

They spent three hours in silent agony as they watched nurses and doctors summon various families to see their loved ones in recovery, just waiting for their last name to be called. They knew that they wouldn't all be let in, so they agreed to have the oldest three see (y/n) when it was their turn. Todomatsu had spent most of the time looking up head injuries and what could incur from them if different parts of the brain were damaged, silently thankful to Osomatsu for bringing his charging cord.

"Party for (l/n)?" A male nurse softly called out into the nearly empty waiting room. Osomatsu, Karamatsu, and Choromatsu practically leapt to their feet, quickly rushing to the nurse with desperation clearly written on their face. The nurse kept a neutral look and waved them in, leading the way deeper into the hospital before opening a small office door.

The three eldest sat in the provided chairs and waited for further instructions.

"The surgeon will be right with you," The nurse barely nodded before closing the door.

Choromatsu glanced around the room, "Glad we decided on three...the office is too small for all six of us."

"They probably only let a maximum of three people in here minus the surgeon," Osomatsu fed into the conversation, not wanting any of them to think of the worst case scenario. The door opened before any of them responded, turning their attention to an older man who looked tired.

"You're here for (y/n)?"

"Yes," All three brothers responded at the same time.

"The good news is that she pulled through and we've been able to repair most of the damage," The surgeon sat down at the small table in the room, opposite of the brothers.

"'Most'?" Karamatsu grew concerned.

"We performed a CT scan to see if there was any internal damage and discovered that (y/n)'s brain is not fully functional at this time. Her hippocampus is slightly swollen, possibly from the accident, and she may have difficulty remembering things when she wakes up."

"You mean, she has amnesia?" Choromatsu sat up straighter, his pointed frown tightening and his hand clenched tightly over his knees.

"We can't be certain at this time. She'll be moved to the ICU when they've finished the procedure, and she'll be monitored constantly while there," The surgeon took in a small breath, "Does she have any relatives that live nearby? Someone we can contact?"

"We're the closest thing to family she has here," Osomatsu met the surgeon's inquiring gaze, "Her biological family is overseas."

"Then we'll keep your information on file and notify you when she's able to have visitors. Talk with the front desk and they'll be able to set you up."

The surgeon stood up and reached out his hand to each brother, shaking them in turn before leaving the door open behind him. The brothers took the hint and walked back out to the waiting room, staying silent while their minds raced to figure out what they'd tell the other three.

A phone call came through on Todomatsu's cell a few days later, the caller ID labeling it as the hospital's main number. The other five instantly crowded around as Totty picked up, listening in silence as the doctor assigned to take care of (y/n) broke the news.

Anterograde amnesia.

The nurses checking up on (y/n) had found her awake and documented everything that she had done, but (y/n) didn't remember doing any of it. Another CT scan was performed and a more accurate reading was found that her hippocampus was still swollen, albeit a little less than the initial scan. (Y/n) would stay in the hospital until her wounds healed, but she'd need someone to care for her until her brain is able to repair the broken connections in her memory or until she passes.

"Some cases are temporary, but we will continue to monitor her while she is here."

Karamatsu hiccuped, quickly withdrawing from the bedroom and down the stairs. Osomatsu and Ichimatsu looked after him for a moment before the oldest stood to follow, leaving the other four to stay by the phone and ask the doctor questions.

Osomatsu gently padded down the stairs, turning the corner to see Karamatsu crouched by the bathroom down the hallway, furiously wiping his face with the sleeves of his pajamas. The eldest didn't say anything as he sat right behind Karamatsu, reclining until their backs touched. The younger of the two slightly flinched at the contact before fully leaning back against Osomatsu, the crying slowly stopping.

"Wanna see her first thing?"

"Yeah..."

Karamatsu, Ichimatsu, and Todomatsu stood in front of the door, (y/n)'s last name plate hanging up next to it. The tension between the brothers was almost palpable before Karamatsu took a deep breath and slid the door open, revealing a private patient room with a single bed and a small sitting area for visitors, as well as a curtained area for nurses to prep doses without interfering with the patient.

(Y/n) was sitting up in the bed, her eyes staring at a book in front of her as she turned a page. The sound of the door drew her attention, and she looked over to see the brothers, letting them see the full extent of her injuries.

Thick gauze was wrapped from her forehead towards the back of her neck, the bandages angled to where they wouldn't slide off. Her left eye was purple and swollen, but left uncovered. A few cuts were healing on her lips, and some scratches across her face were in the process of healing. Her right arm was wrapped in a cast and lay in a sling across her chest, while her left elbow was gauzed up.

(Y/n) gave them a wide smile.

"Hey, guys! Come on in," She closed the book and let it sit on the bedside tray, watching the three shuffle in and awkwardly sit on the couch.

Silence filled the room.

"Uh...so..." (Y/n) tried to start a conversation, pausing heavily for a little bit, "That game was pretty intense, wasn't it?"

"Game...?" Todomatsu asked.

"The mahjong game," (Y/n) sounded certain.

"Ah,

that

game. Yeah, it got pretty crazy there towards the end, didn't it?" Karamatsu nudged an elbow into Todomatsu's side, "How has your sleep been?"

"Fine, I think."

"Do you...know who we are?" Ichimatsu looked away as he asked, unsure if he wanted to hear the answer or not.

"Of course, I do! Karamatsu, Ichimatsu, and Todomatsu," She pointed to each one in turn, "I'm guessing that they have a visitor limit, otherwise the other three would be here, too, huh."

A silent collective sigh of relief rushed through the brothers, letting Karamatsu stand up and reveal a small bouquet of flowers from behind his back. He quickly put them in the available vase and filled it with water, setting it next to (y/n)'s bed.

"These are for you. We're hoping that they'd remind you of us when we're not here," Karamatsu turned to (y/n), seeing a sincere smile dance across her chapped lips.

"Like I'd ever be able to forget you guys," She looked towards the other two, "Since I only have you for the next...hour or so, is there anything that you guys wanted to do?"

"Why don't you...tell us about the book you were reading when we came in?" Todomatsu offered, sliding his phone into his back pocket.

"Book?" (Y/n) looked a little confused before looking down at the bedside tray still in front of her, "Oh, hey! I remember reading this in junior high!"

She held up the book like it was a prize she had just won, gently opening the book to a folded page. A quizzical look crossed her face before shrugging and turning to the first page, sliding a finger over the book to keep the pages down as she looked back up to the brothers.

"Did you guys want me to read out loud?"

"...sure. But I want to ask a question before you start," Karamatsu moved back over to the couch.

"Go ahead."

"What's the last thing you remember?"

"The Mahjong game almost a week ago. That's the last thing she remembers," Karamatsu huffed as he lay on the carpeted floor, staring up at the familiar ceiling of the shared bedroom.

"So, we can talk about anything before that and she's fine?" Choromatsu looked up from his book, switching from his usual reading to books describing how to care for someone with a head injury.

"Yeah," Karamatsu covered his eyes with his left forearm, "Anything between the Mahjong game and what happened

that

day...she doesn't remember."

"Gotcha," Osomatsu stood up from his lounging position, "Then she's still there personality-wise. We just have to be prepared to answer the same questions over and over."

"That's gonna be annoying..." Ichimatsu barely whispered. He looked back towards Jyushimatsu, the yellow-clad brother sitting in a corner with his elongated sleeve over his mouth, his eyes focused in thought, "Jyushimatsu...?"

Jyushimatsu looked shocked out of his thinking, closing his eyes and rubbing the back of his head a bit before looking towards his brothers.

"They said the amnesia could be temporary, right? Would she...remember anything that happened between the game and when she's able to remember stuff again?"

"...not likely," Todomatsu spoke, his finger scrolling through a digital medical journal, "Professionals say that it'll be like a blank spot for them. There's a chance that whoever suffers can remember bits and pieces, but it's not guaranteed."

"I'm gonna keep a journal for her," Jyushimatsu gave a wide smile, laughing a little, "That way she can read it when she remembers stuff again and know what happened!"

"That's...a good idea," Osomatsu huffed with a smile, "Whoever visits her can write their entry of what they did, sounds fair?"

The brothers nodded as one.

\\\\

Day 1

:

We didn't do much when Ichimatsu and I visited, but you loved the puzzles that we brought over. They were small in size with an easy difficulty, each

one a different picture of your favorite animal, and we couldn't help but laugh as you tried to find the border pieces.

You gave up halfway, pouting that one of us must've stolen some pieces despite it being a sealed box when you got it. You were cute with some of the bandages gone. You've always been cute...

You asked us to stay longer than the visiting hours, even offered a plan to sneak us under your hospital bed so the nurses wouldn't find us. As tempting as it was, we couldn't stay with you. You needed rest and we would only keep you up.

Osomatsu

Day 4

:

If I knew it was the fourth entry in this journal, I wouldn't have gone...always unlucky.

You were in physical therapy for your arm, since the cast came off a few days ago. I wish I was able to sit in on your sessions, to watch you progress more and more. Totty let me borrow his phone to take pictures of some of the new cats on the street, and you wanted me to name the scrawny ginger cat after you.

I told you that I'd never name them...they aren't mine. I wish I could, but they have their own lives to live.

...but maybe I'll name the ginger one after you. It has your eye color, anyway.

Ichimatsu

Day 8

:

It wasn't as boring today when you read your favorite book for the sixth time, pointing out your favorite parts again and laughing at the same comedic scenes. I tried to read with you, but you kept turning away and forgetting that I was right next to you. Not in a bad way, though! No...this was complete immersion and that's okay!

I...had a hard time leaving today. Seeing you alone in the room with the blue flowers that Karamatsu had left you yesterday was heartbreaking. I'll try to stop by a flower shop that dyes their white flowers green, so that way you have a constant reminder of me.

I can't wait to see you on your own two feet again,

Choromatsu

Day 14

:

My beautiful (y/n), today was quite a wondrous visitation with you!

I had refreshed the bouquet of flowers I had given you a few days ago, only to find that your little garden of vases has grown to include the whole color spectrum! The only thing that was missing was your favorite color, so I will bring that on my next scheduled visit!

The movie we watched together was quite entertaining, and made you laugh hard enough that your sides were hurting. But no worries! There were no new injuries to worry over, but we had to change movies before the nurses grew too concerned about your health. I haven't seen you smile like that in quite a while, which makes me wonder how my brothers' visits are going. Reading through this journal has eased my fears!

We cannot wait to present this journal to you when you completely recover.

With much anticipation of your freedom,

Karamatsu

Day 17

:

Wow! You've been in there for quite a while! But you're definitely getting better, I can tell. You're smiling a lot more, remembering just a little bit more each time we come by. You remembered that big brother Ichimatsu showed you a ginger cat picture, and that it was Karamatsu that brought over your favorite flower in your favorite color! That hasn't happened before!

You always thought that the nurses did that.

Nope! It was us!

I took you for a run today! You said that you wanted fresh air, so I carried you all the way to the roof patio. The nurses got mad, but you were laughing with me! It was so fun!

I got to hear you scream in joy as I bounded up the staircase, just like when I used to give you piggyback rides.

I should do that more often!

Jyushimatsu

Day 23

:

(Y/n), you stunned me today. That doesn't happen very often! You remembered that I brought over some library books for you to read and were able to recount most of their plots to me. I didn't have to repeat any questions or answer the same thing...(Y/n), you're getting better.

But you scared us.

You became closed off yesterday and

really

scared us. I don't know if you remember, but I want to tell you what happened.

Don't think that we haven't noticed you looking at us in this weird way. It's been happening since we first visited, but you finally put that look to words yesterday.

'How do I know that you're not feeding me false information' were the exact words you asked and our shocked silence made your attitude worse.

(Y/n), you are you. We like you...

No...we love you.

I love you.

We all love you.

It's been hard to see you think that we're using this to turn you into someone you're not. We may be idiots, but we're not that cruel...and we'd never think of pranking you like that. Don't tell anyone else this, but we've been struggling ourselves. I see it in my brothers every day and I know they're feeling the same way I do: How can we tell you that we love you without you forgetting about it?

Flowers.

Books.

Puzzles.

My asshole brother stealing my phone to show you pictures of cats.

Small things that are present in your room to remind you that we're always near, that...we want to be with you. For as long as possible.

The journal/diary was Jyushimatsu's idea, but it's turned more into a long love letter for you from us. By the time you read this, you'll be out of the hospital and living on your own again. We want you to keep this, to remind you that you don't need to change or become someone else to be liked.

We're dumb, we're guys that don't understand how emotions work between a man and a woman, and this journal shows it. (Well...I do, but let's not tell the others.)

So, here's our collective love confession from six idiots that want a smart, passionate, caring girl: Be ours.

Todomatsu

(and the other assholes)

I stared at the last few lines, tears welling up as I held the ragged journal between my hands. Thumbing through the last few pages to see that there were a few other entries, I kept flipping back to Todomatsu's last entry. The words were plain to see despite the scribblings of the other brothers trying to correct his words, but the corrections never touched the line 'We all love you'.

Biting back a sob, I looked up to the six identical men sitting in front of me in the grass, the light wind playing with their hair as their faces held a tense expression. They knew what I read.

I hadn't known what their true feelings were towards me. They had always played our relationship as one of a sibling and never strayed beyond that. There were times where I had felt something between us, but I squashed it before it could bloom into something I thought I would regret.

Years...it had been like this for

years

.

I couldn't have known, right? But they couldn't have known about my feelings either, since I never told them. Here they were as if we were back in middle school, waiting to see if a crush liked them back and preparing for the negative answer.

Gripping the journal tightly in my right hand, I lunged forward from the park bench and grabbed all of them in a hug, pushing them down to the ground with my momentum.

"Yes...yes...!" I let the tears flow freely, "I love you guys, too...!"

I felt their arms surround me and we became a sobbing mess in the park, not caring about who was watching. I wasn't worried about how our new relationship would work. They had managed to keep a journal for me while I was recovering, so I was sure that they'd be able to handle sharing me amongst themselves.

Brothers x Chubby!Reader

Inspired by Boogirl107's prompt.

I glanced at the snack tray again, probably for the fifth time this hour, eyeing the unwrapped candies that were plated nicely in the middle of the round table. The six other occupants were talking amongst themselves about random things, picking on some of their previous mistakes while making fun of the embarrassing moments that had happened recently. I tore my eyes from the candy, sternly reminding myself that I couldn't embarrass myself here...not in front of the guys.

The Matsuno sextuplets had been my friends for a while, rambunctious and full of energy at times. They never mentioned my recent uncomfortable weight gain or even brought attention to it, at least when I was around them. I always heard the whispers when we were in public, though, and I'd been wearing more layers recently to try and hide my actual size from prying eyes.

It was the heated middle of summer, yet I was still wearing jeans with a long-sleeved sweatshirt. The guys were dressed down in hooded short-sleeves and shorts, completely unfazed by the heat seeping through the walls and open windows of their house. I would be lying if I said I wasn't jealous that they were able to do that.

"So it's decided then," The third eldest, Choromatsu, spoke up and silenced the other conversations.

I looked over to him with a raised eyebrow. I had been so focused on my own internal battle of snacking more that I'd been ignoring what was going on.

"We head to the ocean tomorrow for an all-day excursion!" He slammed down a magazine onto the table, his hand holding down a page displaying a beach paradise.

I paled.

Beaches were my enemy. In fact, any public place where people could be nearly naked was the bane of my existence.

"All right!" The eldest, Osomatsu, called out while standing up, "Since that's decided, let's find some games to play while there."

"We could smash some watermelons!" The yellow-clad brother, Jyushimatsu, waved his arms above his head, clearly excited about this.

"I'll bring the sunglasses," The second-eldest lifted his leg in the air before folding it over the other, snapping his fingers once. I buried my head into my arms, trying to become nothing.

"What about you, (y/n)?" I felt a hand tap my shoulder in an attempt to draw my attention, "Anything you want to suggest?"

I barely glanced over my arms to see the youngest sextuplet, Todomatsu, kneeling next to me, his lips curled upwards in a curious smile. Digging my head back into my arms, I shook my head as a negative answer to his question.

"Did...you not want to go...?" Todomatsu asked, the tone in his voice sounding slightly hurt.

"...it's not that I don't want to go..." I lifted my head up again, "It's just that..."

I didn't want to shoot down their fun idea. I had to make up an excuse for me not to go.

"I don't have a bathing suit."

It wasn't exactly a lie. The one-piece I had still fit me, but it was stretched out and almost thread-bare from my stubbornness of not replacing it.

"We could ask Totoko if you wanted to borrow one of hers," Osomatsu smirked, his hands on his hips.

"

No!

" I shouted louder than I meant to, recovering quickly, "No...her style doesn't really fit my tastes."

The brothers grew silent, glancing at each other before looking at me again.

"Then we go shopping for one," They commented at the same time, as if it was the most obvious thing in the world. My face flushed with embarrassment again.

"It's all right, guys...!" I unfurled my limbs and scooted away from the table, trying to get out of the conversation, "I can look on my own while you get everything else ready...?"

"(Y/n)..." Todomatsu's voice dropped into a teasing tone, "Are you worried about what we'll see?"

"Not really, no...I just..." My mind scrambled for another excuse, "I just don't feel comfortable with six guys shopping for a girl's swimsuit. It seems more like something you'd do with female friends."

"Perfect! Then I'll ask Totoko to accompany you," He opened his phone and started a call to Totoko's phone, standing up and taking a few steps away from me.

"Wait...!" I tried to stop him, crawling over and hoping to pluck the phone from his hand, but the call was picked up too quickly.

"Totoko, we have a small question for you," He lowered his eyes to me, his lips curling up even more in mischief, "Would you like to take (y/n) shopping for a bathing suit?"

I heard her excitedly gasp over the line before she stated that she had nothing better to do.

"Great, we'll send her your way."

"You heard her, (y/n)," I felt a hand on my shoulder, looking over to see Osomatsu grinning widely, "You've got plans for the rest of the day."

"No, I--"

"Ah,

my honey

, I wish that we could come with you to ease your fears of the shopping world, but alas, we have our own

plan

to work with!" Another hand lay on my other shoulder, Karamatsu's voice laced with broken English.

"Guys, plea--"

"

Adieu

!"

Both older brothers pushed me from the common room to out the front door, sliding it closed behind me after I passed the threshold. I was left standing in the front courtyard in the grueling heat, whining to myself as I begrudgingly made my way towards Totoko's house.

If I didn't go, I know she'd hunt me down.

I could only stare at the storefront, the window display models perfectly wearing thin string bikinis and swimming covers over their plastic forms. Totoko happily walked into the store, greeting those who called out to her as she went.

My sense of style was more akin to the fourth-oldest sextuplet with his loose hoodies with baggy sweatpants, so I was completely out of my element when it came to swimsuits that were

designed

to cling to skin. I took a deep breath and walked into the store, trailing behind Totoko with zero enthusiasm about where I was.

She pulled several swimsuits from the racks, holding them up and eyeing me from a distance before either putting them back or hooking them over her arm. Most of the ones she kept were one-pieces.

Maybe she was actually being considerate...?

A flash of my favorite color caught my eye, making me look towards the clearance rack. I pushed aside the swimsuits around it and took the attention-seeking swimsuit from the rack, holding it up to see a lavish one-piece with frills around the leg holes, a fake diamond planted every so often along the frill length. It was three different shades, one lighter and one darker to compliment the entire piece. The shades were layered like a diagonal cake, each fading into the other. Another frill piece started at the armpits on the straps, growing larger around the shoulders before dipping down towards the back.

"Did you want to try that one on?" Totoko asked from behind me, her voice startling me and nearly making me jump.

"Ah...maybe...I don't know," I mumbled as she took the suit from my hands, putting it in front of the other four on her arm, "I mean...it probably won't fit."

"That's why you're trying it on," She tilted her head to the side, a smile spreading her lips as she turned towards one of the employees to ask for a changing room. I lowered my head and followed behind, watching as the suits were hung on a wall hook in a changing room.

"Let me know if you like any of them, okay?" Totoko tried to be reassuring before I was left in the changing room alone.

I looked at the other swimsuits that she had chosen, noticing only one of them was a two-piece. It was a plain bottom piece with a long top piece, the fabric hanging down near where my hips would be, almost acting like a shirt.

Slowly taking off my layers, I left on my undergarments and began trying on the swimsuits, looking at the mirror and frowning at what I was seeing.

They all fit fine, and were comfortable to wear out of the water...but I wasn't

happy

in any of them. I could find a flaw with each one, including the one that I picked out for myself.

Why?

Why was it so easy for me to persuade myself that I looked ugly in

every single one

?! I wasn't disgusting, or ugly by society standards...I was fine healthwise, so...

My eyes landed on my hips, seeing the skin bulge before rolling down where my hip bones were. The

fat

that I had let accumulate after high school.

My face grew red with shame, shoving my face into my hands to try and not let my sobs escape my mouth.

I've always known why. I looked at the mirror again in sorrow, meeting my own gaze and just staring at myself.

I'd get a swimsuit, but I'd layer up over it tomorrow. That's how I'd survive. As long as the guys didn't offer to swim, I wasn't going to volunteer the idea.

Taking off the current swimsuit and donning the one I had picked out, a small smile parted my lips. If I actually gave this one more than a thought, I really liked it.

"Did you find one?" I heard Totoko outside the door.

"Yeah, I did."

"The beach!" Jyushimatsu shouted as he held a dolphin inflatable above his head, kicking off his flip-flops before running towards the shore.

The shore itself wasn't terribly crowded, to my relief, and the people that were there seemed to be minding their own business and tending to their own parties. I helped haul down a cooler full of refreshing drinks and beer, following the brothers to a spot they picked out. It was close to the shore, but away from the crowds that had already claimed their spots for the day.

Jyushimatsu's laughter could be heard from the water as he splashed around, calling for his brothers to join in.

After laying out the large blanket on the sand, the brothers split up into different activities while I continued to prepare the area for the afternoon sun. Opening my sun umbrella and planting it in a secure spot, I went back and collected Jyushimatsu's sandals from the wooden walkway, smiling as I found Ichimatsu huddled underneath the sun umbrella with a towel over his head.

"Need me to put sunscreen on you...?" I offered as I knelt nearby, pulling out the aforementioned item from one of the many bags.

"...sure..." He took off the towel, but didn't move any further. I scooted closer and began to apply a generous layer of sunscreen, knowing that he hated the sun as much as Todomatsu did. I rubbed the back of his neck before handing him the bottle so he could do the front and his legs. He took it and I moved away so he could do his yearly ritual, watching the rest of the brothers lounge in the sand with sunglasses, or play in the water.

"Are you gonna join them...?" Ichimatsu asked before tossing me the bottle after he was finished.

"Ah...no, I'm good here," I put the sunscreen bottle away.

I already knew that I was the odd one out on the beach, the only person wearing a sweatshirt and long shorts. The only parts that remained exposed were my head, hands, and lower legs. I had the new swimsuit on underneath, but it was just in case someone decided to splash me.

"All right."

We fell silent and watched Jyushimatsu play with the dolphin inflatable before Karamatsu stood up and walked towards the umbrella, his hands tugging up the tank top shirt and exposing his chest. I glanced away as he tugged down his shorts, hearing him pull them off and folding them up.

"Where did we put the sunscreen?" He asked in a singsong tone.

"In that bag," I pointed at the one I dropped the bottle into, looking back to see Karamatsu in his swim trunks.

"

Wonderful

!" He reached in and began to apply it wherever there was exposed skin, "I'm going to join Jyushimatsu in the water. Would you like to join us, (y/n)?"

"Oh, I'm good for now," I waved both hands, giving him a small smile before seeing Jyushimatsu rush up behind Karamatsu and grab Ichimatsu's

arm, roughly pulling him towards the water with a wide smile on his face. Ichimatsu protested the whole way while hastily removing the towel and shorts, tossing them back towards the blanket.

"Where are Osomatsu and Choromatsu?" I looked at the spot where the aforementioned brothers were to see it now vacant.

"They said that they were going to...'deal with a problem'," Karamatsu rubbed sunscreen on the back of his legs, leaning down towards me as he did.

"Todomatsu?" I raised an eyebrow at his words.

"Probably. He has a habit of...getting ahead of us...at times," He offered the bottle to me, "Would you mind getting my back?"

"Oh, sure," I stood up and squeezed a small amount, knowing that Karamatsu didn't mind getting a healthy tan around this time of year. Smearing it on both hands, I started to work on his back, moving from his broad shoulders down to his waist. Each muscle was pronounced and partially flexed as I moved my fingers over them, "You've been busy this year..."

"I gotta stay in shape to keep up with my brothers," He laughed, his back partially pushing into my hands with each sharp inhale, "Gotta be able to withstand whatever they throw at me."

"That's true," I laughed with him, knowing he meant the throwing part literally. After applying the sunscreen, I took a step away and sat back down, leaving Karamatsu to stretch and jog towards the brothers playing around in the water. Seeing Ichimatsu's discarded items, I quickly grabbed and folded them before placing the items near the umbrella.

"...such a weirdo..."

I heard the voices of a few people walking behind me, lowering my eyes in an attempt to not look at them.

"Maybe it's a part of a challenge?"

"No way!"

Three females...great...

"I've only seen fat people dress like that. If they didn't want to be here, then why show up at all?" The third scoffed as something popped in her mouth, possibly gum.

"Haha! So true!" The second girl laughed as they continued to walk away.

I buried my head in my arms, crossing them over my knees as I curled up into a ball as much as I could. Sweat began to bead on my forehead, drawing my attention to how uncomfortably hot the air had become.

I'd be more comfortable with just the swimsuit on...but I'd be laughed at for my oversized thighs.

"You're not going in?"

I jumped at Osomatsu's voice, looking up to see him reach into the cooler and pull out a canned beer. He was already in his swim trunks with the borrowed pair of sunglasses acting as a headband to push back his bangs. The eldest sat down right next to me, popping open the can and taking a long swig of the cold alcohol inside.

I couldn't answer.

"I wanna see what's under that, you know," I felt his index finger poke at my shoulder, indicating the sweatshirt I was wearing, "Totoko sent a picture of it on a hanger, but I wanna see for myself."

"No...it's okay," I clenched the fabric of my sweatshirt between my fingers, fearing what he was going to say if he saw the accentuated rolls of fat only exacerbated by the swimsuit.

"(Y/n)," The tone of his voice made me flinch, "We're not going to judge you."

The words made me blush, feeling my ears heat up. A cloud passed between the sun and the beach, dousing it in temporary shade. I heard Osomatsu shift even closer, feeling his side press against mine as he wrapped an arm around my shoulders.

"We're not ashamed to be seen with you," His breath danced against my ear, the whisper hanging between us like a secret, "If we were, we wouldn't have mentioned going to the beach yesterday."

The cloud moved along its course, exposing the beach to the full effect of the sun once again. I looked over at Osomatsu in shock, our faces only inches apart.

Of course they didn't care about what I looked like. They each had a slightly different body type as well, and were baring most of it without a care in the world. The brothers were just enjoying each other's company...and waiting for me to join them in the fun.

My bottom lip quivered a little before I dug my face into my arms again, trying to regain my composure.

How many times did they need to tell me before I finally understand that they didn't care about what I looked like?

"So..." Osomatsu squeezed my shoulders a little before releasing them, "What do you say?"

"Sure," I looked back at him again with a smile.

"All right!" He moved in front of me with an expectant look on his face, the beer can clenched tightly in his hand, "I call--"

A body came flying from my right peripheral vision, a bare foot colliding with Osomatsu's face and sending him spiraling away from the blanket.

"You shitty eldest, what were you crowding (y/n) for?!" Choromatsu stood up from his flying kick, stomping over to Osomatsu with a frown on his face, "You damn lecher!"

"It's not what you were thinking of, Fappymatsu...!" Osomatsu kicked himself into a sitting position and glared at Choromatsu, holding the open cold can against the cheek Choromatsu kicked, "I was just talking to (y/n) about her swimwear!"

"Hhuuuuhhh?!" Choromatsu's voice raised in disbelief as his eyes hooded in a glare.

"A fight

already

...?" I heard Todomatsu groan towards my right, looking over to see that his outfit was roughed up a bit. He dropped his hat onto the blanket before unbuttoning his shirt and shorts, revealing a skin-tight swim shirt and swim trunks. Todomatsu reached down to me and offered a hand, "Wanna swim and leave these two alone to fight it out?"

"Sure," I took his hand and was lightly pulled to my feet, surprised at Todomatsu's hidden strength.

"Wait...really?" Choromatsu and Todomatsu looked shocked as Osomatsu grinned at me, all three looking at me with expectation. I bit my inner lip as I reached for the hem of my sweatshirt, pulling it off in the most unseductive way I could to reveal the top half of the swimsuit I picked out. I looked down at my feet before tugging down the shorts, revealing the frilled bottom half.

"You're gonna swim with us, (y/n)?!" Jyushimatsu shouted from the water, a wide and happy grin on his face.

"Yeah, just let me lotion up!" I called back, reaching for the sunscreen. It was snatched from my hands before I could open the cap, my eyes following it to Osomatsu's face with his signature smirk.

"I call dibs."

Steampunk!Brothers and Steampunk!Reader

Requested by Melabi_Fork.

Roles I'm working with (brothers are

not

related):

Osomatsu:

A male who's on the run after being charged with a string of murders. He's able to blend into society, but tends to get carried away and blows his cover often. Osomatsu is actively using Ichimatsu as a mechanic (after hours) and likes to mess around with Todomatsu by leaving false clues of his whereabouts.

Karamatsu:

A bounty hunter who's been put on the job to kill Osomatsu. Sees that the contact is illegal but can't disobey his boss so he tries his best not to meet Osomatsu on the field. Todomatsu helps him from time to time with smaller contracts to pay the repair bills on his weapons.

Choromatsu:

A simple reporter who dreams of making a big-time headline, he is friends with (and employs the skills of) Ichimatsu. His current article is following the curtails of the police and chasing down the criminal mastermind that leaves a calling card at the recent string of murders.

Ichimatsu:

While quite skilled in engineering and mechanical work, Ichimatsu tends to leave his workshop from time to time to accompany some of his clients and ensure that their equipment doesn't break down. He tends to keep to himself (unless on a job), and stays away from people he doesn't really know.

Jyushimatsu:

A rogue scientist that lets his experiments run wild more often than he'll admit, Jyushimatsu is someone that goes out onto the field to let his projects and experiments go free. While most of them end up falling apart before they can get out of hand, he has been detained a few times by Todomatsu and reprimanded for the property damage sustained.

Todomatsu:

With his hands constantly busy with sightings and reports of one of the more feared criminals running loose in his city, Todomatsu employs bounty hunters to track down and take care of the smaller fry. There are times when he hires bounty hunters to assist in hunting down the elusive high-profile criminal but he manages to lose the trails so often that there's an ongoing bet with the other detectives to see if Todomatsu can even catch the guy.

Reader:

A young woman that is more comfortable in her lab than out in public, (y/n) specializes in creating toxins and poisons (along with their antidotes and counters). She sells her antidotes to those that need it while keeping the toxins in her personal collection, using them in small amounts to grow an immunity against them. (Y/n) isn't a registered bounty hunter, but she will assist the police force and bounty hunters when they go against criminals known to use chemicals in her field of expertise.

The smoke cut through the filter in her breathing mask, making her choke and wheeze as the dangerous smog filled the compartment. The goggles were tailored to keep anything lighter than water out, ensuring her optical protection, but the breathing mask hadn't been upgraded that far. Any sized

particle could pass through the flimsy filter she had been swindled with and it could cost her the job one day, if it wasn't today. The backup she had was supposed to be here, ensuring that the zeppelin wouldn't fall on Akatsuka City should she fail her task...but she had somehow failed spectacularly.

Unable to take any length of breath without coughing or hacking, she knew it was better to keep the face mask on as the smoke from the fire swallowed the compartment completely. The damned crazy criminal had rigged his 'home' to blow should he fear an intruder, a kind of rudimentary system with a high percentage of failure or discharge before it was primed.

Her luck had definitely run out this week: a faulty delivery that led to a customer losing their hearing temporarily, the filter in her mask being mismarked as an appropriate size, and now her mission was literally going up in flames because the dumb system decided to fail when she was nowhere near an escape hatch. She'd ask if it could get any worse, but karma always revelled for such a moment. She wasn't going to give the gods the satisfaction of ruining her plea for a reprieve.

"--n)--!" A voice called out through the smoke, the sound growing closer as a loud hum reverberated through the nearby hull. The level she thought she was on wasn't close enough to the envelope to hear any exterior noise, which meant she had followed the wrong path.

...

more bad luck

...

Her left hand shakily reached towards her utility leather belt, struggling to pull out a metallic rod with a raised bump on one end. The metal was getting hotter in her hand, a sign that the temperature in the room was steadily rising and a warning that the onboard fire was encroaching closer to her location. Her thumb depressed the raised bump as hard as the mechanism would allow before she gave a last strangled cough and fell limp on the metal catwalk.

The lurching behemoth of a zeppelin crawled into the sky like a beast struggling to take one last flight before an explosion ripped through the tail section, the sheeting releasing the last gulps of helium as the flames greedily licked at the metallic frame. A credit to the builder, the zeppelin didn't immediately dive back down to the ground a mile underneath it, but no one could tell if that was a positive thing at the moment.

A handful of people were scurrying around the still-airborne frame, using their own aviation mechanisms to stay aloft with the groaning carcass of the blimp. Some were towing cables to try and steer the craft away from the populated areas while others hauled up thick tubes from the ground, gripping the nozzles tightly as water rushed through the fabric piping.

One such vehicle ripped through the sky, darting in as close as it could to the failing behemoth before pulling away and turning back towards it, almost like a bee scouting out food. The vehicle pulled away from its chosen spot as a spurt of fire belched from one of the port windows, its rider quickly recovering and steering the air-borne mechanism back towards its target.

"

Karamatsu, you have to pull back! It's too dangerous!

" The rider's earpiece clipped with metallic interference, the person's warning falling on discouraged ears.

"She's in there because of my contract...!" The rider reached up and pinned his hat to the top of his head, keeping the accessory from flying off due to the change in air pressure around him. He gritted his teeth as his other hand pulled the flying mechanism away from the zeppelin, knowing he only had another minute or two before it crashed into the ground below.

A snap of metal brought his attention to the envelope above him, seeing a sizable hole rip open the sturdy fabric as a smaller flying contraption burst through the skin of the zeppelin. His shock faded quickly into determination

as he recognized the figure straddling the contraption, partially realizing that they were speeding away quickly from the falling airship and darting towards some part of the city underneath them. The fluttering red jacket gave them away, as well as the signature handmade flying machine that seemed to be a hybrid of a wheeled vehicle and a lounging chair.

Osomatsu.

The man currently on the run from the law and its bounty hunters, and guilty of a string of murders within the last few years. The same man that the rider had been hunting for just as long; the same man who was cradling a woman in his arms.

The rider pulled his machine away from the crashing zeppelin, more concerned for the woman that he had been working with for the past few weeks than tracking down a small-time criminal supposedly within the crashing balloon. He followed the two figures towards a rundown hangar, stopping outside the open bay doors when he saw them dart into the hangar itself. Pulling his shotgun from its back holster, he armed the weapon and took long strides into the hangar, seeing Osomatsu rip the goggles and mask off the woman.

"Step away from my partner!" The rider shouted while cocking the shotgun, the sound echoing in the hangar and making the criminal flinch as he was leaning down towards the woman's face.

"Karamatsu! (Y/n)'s inhaled too much smoke..." Osomatsu barely spared the rider a glance before leaning back towards the woman, turning an ear to her open mouth and holding his breath. The rider, Karamatsu, partially lowered the shotgun as his worry overcame his urge to catch the criminal with a large bounty. Shoving the shotgun back into its sheath, he strode towards the woman, kneeling on her other side as his eyes took in her status.

The woman was covered in soot and ash, the areas where her goggles and breathing mask had been were untouched by the dust. Her outfit was tainted with black soot, covering up some of the bright coloration on her tunic and side skirt.

Karamatsu's hands deftly hovered around her head before he bit his bottom lip.

"I don't have any oxygen on my craft."

"Neither do I," Osomatsu confirmed before hunching over (y/n)'s body as the hangar groaned from all around them, the ground rumbling in tandem as the zeppelin must've landed nearby.

"Shit," Karamatsu looked back towards where he parked his flying craft, mentally going over what he had onboard before looking back at Osomatsu. The criminal was already clambering over something on his machine, his back turned away from Karamatsu and (y/n). Yanking on something hidden from view, Osomatsu pulled something out from the steering column before messing with what he was originally working on.

A radio crackled to life on his machine.

"

...Repairs..."

A tired voice droned through the partial static and radio snow on the channel.

"Ichimatsu, it's me. (Y/n) needs oxygen," Osomatsu kept fiddling with something in the wiring, the radiowave snow starting to vanish.

"

...like for a project? She coul-"

"She's suffering from smoke inhalation. We're at one of my hangars...do you have any?"

Karamatsu heard the criminal's voice crack a little, doing mental hurdles to figure out if performing CPR would have an adverse reaction. Without sparing another second, he threw off his hat and tilted her chin up to level out her throat, pressing his lips to hers and exhaling a deep breath. Keeping

an eye on her chest to see it rise and fall with each breath, Karamatsu strained his hearing to keep track of what Osomatsu was doing.

"

...she's not a machine, Osomatsu. If she needs medical help, then call a doctor..."

Karamatsu nearly choked as (y/n) coughed in the middle of his breathing, immediately pulling away and propping her up as Osomatsu turned to look at the commotion, a radio transponder in one of his hands. He tossed the transponder down and rushed towards Karamatsu, his eyes focused on (y/n) as she took in deep breaths between her coughing fits.

It was hard to breathe, but she was slowly recovering as her vision sharpened with each gulp of oxygen she took. The burning sensation in her nostrils was still present, but the source was no longer in her proximity. Curling a fist around the metal rod, she was a little surprised to find her hand empty, the fog clearing in her mind as two people swirled into being.

One was wearing a black jacket with blue lining that bore the brunt of a lot of wind- and weather-damage, his hair tousled about with a light blush on his cheeks as a smile spread his lips thin. A metallic-gold gun stock was visible over his right shoulder, the gun sling hugging his chest over the off-white vest and shirt. Soft leather gloves deftly moved something from her face as her vision cleared.

The other was covered in a vibrant red coat, the right shoulder covered with a molded leather pauldron that was strapped in place across his chest. A loose ascot of the same color rested over a black vest, and a glint of glass caught her eye as a pair of flying goggles rested on his dark colored hair.

"Karamatsu...Osomatsu...?" The second name came out as a question, his presence unexpected, "What are you doing here?"

"I was in the area," He leaned back a little, a knowing smirk wide on his face, "Had a feeling that you'd try something."

"(Y/n), what happened in there?" Karamatsu helped her sit up a little, letting her have room to breathe.

"Atsushi wasn't working alone," She turned to Karamatsu, her eyes meeting his in a serious gaze, "Iyami partnered up with him."

Both men dropped their smiles, the name turning over an old memory.

Iyami was a man that could only be described as a scoundrel, taking advantage of anything and everything around him in order for him to make a profit. He was known for his crimes of swindling, money laundering, and even producing counterfeit currency, but over the course of a few months, he had somehow amassed enough wealth to fund his own private fleet.

Atsushi was known for producing illegal drugs for recreational and medicinal use, specializing in airborne forms. He had gained a small profit from selling in the black markets around the city and became a wanted man when his creations were made public. Atsushi was also paranoid about anything and everyone that wasn't him or made by his hand. To hear that he had teamed up with someone else definitely wasn't good news.

That's why (y/n) had volunteered for the scouting job today, because her own created toxins could cancel out whatever Atsushi threw at her or Karamatsu. No one was expecting him to set his airship home ablaze.

"Are you sure it was Iyami?" Karamatsu asked, scanning her eyes for any hint of uncertainty. When she nodded and didn't falter, he looked away briefly before seeing Osomatsu move towards his vehicle, "Where are you going?"

"Somewhere," The reply was short, "You've already pointed your gun at me and I'd like to leave before you change your mind about putting it away."

Osomatsu's aerial vehicle roared to life, steam sputtering out through the exhausts scattered around the vehicle to give it lift. Karamatsu's lips pulled

into thin lines, his eyebrows creased in partial frustration as he watched Osomatsu settle himself into the seat, tucking everything into its place before the red-jacketed man lowered his gaze to the two.

"Osomatsu, wait...!" (Y/n) tried to get up, pushing past Karamatsu's hands and nearly stumbling when her shoe heel caught the edge of her side skirt. Karamatsu caught her before she could fall again, both of them ducking down to avoid Osomatsu's vehicle as he flew out of the hangar overhead. A coughing fit overtook (y/n)'s form for a short while, the outlaw disappearing into the vast sky without a final word of farewell.

"(Y/n), let's get you to a doctor," Karamatsu softly commented as he helped her up, brushing off some of the soot on her shoulders and back, "After we get you cleared healthwise, we can try looking for Atsushi again."

"It's just a cough. I'll be fine," She huffed as she pushed his hands away, dusting off her front before looking slightly disgusted at her gloved hands. Both gloves were smeared with soot and only served to spread it around, "I was able to snag some coordinates, so we can check them out."

Pulling open one of her smaller vials from her belt, she motioned for Karamatsu to take it. He dumped the rolled up piece of paper onto his palm, unfurling it to see three sets of numbers.

"Three of them? I'll go check where they are," He turned towards his own flying machine, turning it on and manually inputting the first set of numbers to see that it was the hangar where the crashed zeppelin had been moored. Deleting the location, Karamatsu put in the second set as he felt his machine lower a little, glancing over his shoulder to see (y/n) sitting on the ledge of his riding platform. Her face was somber, but her fidgeting hands betrayed her agitated mental state.

Taking in a silent breath through his nose, Karamatsu focused on the screen again to see the second coordinates pointed out a location well outside of Akatsuka City's limits that was near the fringe of the Emptiness, a vast desert that swallowed the land to the north. It was crossable only twice a year, due to the ravaging sandstorms that rarely waned in their power.

"Second seems to be a hiding place by the Emptiness. I'll check the third one," Karamatsu partially turned to (y/n)'s sitting form, "Did you want to get changed?"

"That would be a smart idea, wouldn't it?" She gave herself another look-over before shaking her head, "I don't want to lose the trail."

"Someone could mistake you for one of the Lower Piers," He let out a small huff before deleting the second location and inputting the third set of coordinates.

"Then let them. I don't care if someone judges me because of my choice of

fashion

," (Y/n) laughed a little, leaning backwards until her back was touching Karamatsu's right calf, "It doesn't mean that they'd be wrong."

Staying silent on their common ground, Karamatsu raised an eyebrow when the last set pulled up a location that was nestled near the heart of Akatsuka City, close to the capitol building.

"The last set puts us in the middle of the Upper Piers, close enough to the capitol to make any wanted criminal jumpy. Which one did you want to try first?"

"...Don't put that decision to me," (Y/n) mumbled, "I've had a really bad streak of luck and it'll only continue if I choose."

"Then the capitol it is," Karamatsu flicked some switches and gripped the steering mechanism, feeling (y/n) brace herself as the craft hovered off the ground before roaring into the sky, the hangar fading into the cityscape beneath them.

"You crossed the wrong wires and destroyed most of my work!"

"Me is sorry! The dang thing was so hard to finagle with that me got confused."

"'Hard'? It was literally hooking up one wire to a copper socket, not something that you needed an instruction manual for."

He held his breath as he pressed himself against the corner of a building, coming across the conversation by luck. The green coat hanging off his shoulders muffled some of his movement as he reached for the side pouch hanging off the leather belt, biting his bottom lip in frustration that he wasn't fully prepared for this kind of interaction.

His custom-made camera was safely tucked away, the flash bulbs securely stored in their respective canisters along the belt...but what he wouldn't give for a chance to try and get a secretive shot of the arguing pair.

Looking around the corner again, he could only watch and pay attention to what they were saying so he could transcribe it later on for an article. The green paper boy hat sat snug on his head, not even rustling when it was rubbed against the building.

There were two men talking to each other. One was dressed like he belonged in the Upper Piers: a top hat was tinkered to hold some kind of air container with a tube connecting the container to something attached to his hip, a yellow frilled ascot that was way too puffed up on his chest and partially hid a tightened black corset underneath a black mantle draped over his shoulders. A long black jacket covered his frame, partially revealing the brown plaid pants tucked into the near knee-high heeled boots that tapped the ground in frustration.

Atsushi Kanemochi, a high-profile citizen that dabbled in the criminal world.

In front of him was a tall reed of a man, dressed in purple-stained leathers that hugged his shoulders and waist, clamping the long violet trench coat down to his body. The peering man couldn't see his face, but the accent and verbal tick labeled him immediately.

Iyami Fukai, a seasoned criminal with a long track record of money laundering and attempting to circulate counterfeit money. He was never kept in prison for long, as he was an experienced escape artist and wouldn't stay for much longer than a week before trying one of his many escape schemes again.

The man pressed back against the building again, taking a deep breath before unlatching his camera and turning to aim without inserting a flash bulb in the socket. There would still be a loud 'snap' sound as his camera opened its shutters, but there wasn't much he could do about it. Maybe he'd find a way to make it more silent for future attempts.

Depressing the shutter button, he heard the whir of gears as the lens opened for a brief moment to capture the scene, ducking back behind the building after hearing the confirmation 'click' as the lens closed once more. Rushing away from the corner, the photographer clutched his camera close and bolted towards his hovering machine, jumping onto it and clicking his heels into place to start the engine up. The elongated board whirred to life and coughed out a plume of steam, sending the board high into the air as the photographer maneuvered around the local traffic, catching a glimpse of a familiar craft before darting towards it.

"Karamatsu!" He shouted out to the rider, seeing his head perk up and turn towards him, swinging his machine around as something trailed behind. He reared his machine to slow down and watched as Karamatsu did the same, both men stopping within a few feet of each other.

"Choromatsu, what's wrong?"

"I saw Atsushi and Iyami...by the capitol building, just like you said they'd be," Choromatsu caught his breath and motioned to the camera still in his hands, "I think I got a picture of them."

"Hurry and develop it," A feminine voice cut through the conversation, drawing Choromatsu's attention to the back of Karamatsu's little chariot-like machine. The familiar colored hair was covered in soot, outlines of where some of her gear rested on her face was prevalent despite the attempts of brushing the ash away.

"(Y/n)?" Choromatsu raised an eyebrow, "You're not serious in following Karamatsu in, are you?"

"I've hired her onto the Atsushi contract," Karamatsu adjusted his grip on the steering arm, "You're welcome to follow for a story, but stay out of my way."

Without waiting for an answer, Karamatsu wheeled his vehicle to where Choromatsu had come from, accelerating quickly and descending at a near breakneck speed. Choromatsu tilted the nose of his board down, following Karamatsu and (y/n) from behind as they dodged around traffic and buildings, pulling into the alleyway where he had seen the criminal pair. Karamatsu withdrew his shotgun as he landed on the ground, leaving (y/n) to follow him as he charged forward around the corner. Choromatsu landed shortly after, running after (y/n) and keeping his camera pointing forward.

"Hands in the air!" Karamatsu's strong voice echoed off the alleyway walls, the shotgun chambering a round soon after to make the point clear.

"Damn it...!" A rustling was heard before glass shattered against the brick ground, (y/n) rounding the corner just in time to see a man in a top hat retract his hand and cover his mouth as a vial filled with green liquid landed at Karamatsu's feet. Her mind worked quickly to guess that it was some kind of fumigation vial, meant to knock out anything within its range, and tugged open one of the pouches on her right leg. Grabbing a handful of the dust inside, she scattered it on top of the liquid, throwing the handful just as the fumes started to lick up Karamatsu's chest. Turning her attention to the man in the top hat, she pulled out a small glass bottle off the sling on her left leg and threw it in return, knowing that the vial contained a powerful sedative that produced no odor or color.

"Gah!" The tall man standing in front of the other man recoiled back, looking back to see Karamatsu and (y/n) aiming at him. The thrown vial landed near his feet, and both men covered their noses and mouths instinctively.

"Iyami! Atsushi!" Karamatsu called out, pulling the trigger and shooting at both men. (Y/n) recoiled from the loud 'crack' of the buckshot, covering her

ears at the sudden thundering gunshot. The men jumped back, pelted with the rubber balls stuffed within the shotgun casing and recoiled as they hid their vulnerable areas. Karamatsu slid the forestock back, ejecting the empty casing and sliding a fresh cartridge into the chamber as he pulled the forestock forward again, walking towards the cowering men.

"Damn bounty hunter...you should be knocked out!" Atsushi growled, his dark eyes locking onto (y/n) before glancing at the puddle of nullified liquid near her feet.

"Got a few tricks up my sleeve," Karamatsu didn't look at anything else other than his two targets. Bringing both in would pay off his living expenses for the next two years, leaving a little bit leftover for some fun. He hadn't had a big catch like this in quite a while, "You're coming with me to booking. Got a nice cell waiting for you both."

Atsushi glanced up to the sky before a sly grin spread on his face, looking back down at Karamatsu.

"Oh, I don't think so."

Swiftly unclipping the end of the tube that was attached to his belt, he brought it up to his mouth and sucked in a lungful before spewing out a thick cloud of fog at Karamatsu's face. The fog blocked him and Iyami from view as it expanded within the alley, covering Karamatsu and (y/n) as the heavy vapor began to smother them. (Y/n)'s coughs could be heard, swiftly turning into wheezing that sounded like her throat was rubbed raw.

"Guys...!" Choromatsu was outside of the fog, unable to see much movement inside. He yanked one of the larger canisters from his belt and bit down along the length, the ends of the tube popping out to form an emergency breathing filter, taking a step inside and plugging his nose to prevent the acrid odor from entering his lungs accidentally. His outstretched hand brushed against someone's shoulder, yelping as the muzzle of a shotgun met the bottom of his chin before the shotgun was lowered.

Karamatsu waved an apology, a thick scarf covering his nose and mouth from the smoke. He pointed towards where (y/n) was last seen, her coughs

now worryingly silent. Both men stalked towards where they had last heard her, the fog dissipating to reveal that they were alone in the alleyway.

(Y/n) was gone.

"--ure about this. Taking her may make our situation worse."

"Then go and make sure that our trail disappears," Another voice cut in, sounding irritated at the first speaker, "You're good at that."

Footsteps marked their path nearby before passing and fading into the distance, the echoes marking a metallic interior. She kept her eyes closed and widened her nostrils slightly while taking a slow breath in, the smell of worked iron and gunpowder meeting her nose as another set of footsteps made their way closer to her.

"I know you're awake," The second voice called out as it came closer, continuing as someone rested their hand on her head, "And I have a few questions for you."

"I'm not giving my recipes to you," (Y/n) opened her eyes and glared into the black hues of the man in the top hat, a partially satisfied look on his face as he withdrew his hand. She tensed the muscles in her arms and legs, feeling the rope restraints hold her arms behind her and her legs pinned to the legs of the chair she was tethered to.

He fiddled with the brass attachment at the end of the piping from his hat, playing with it like he was just given the biggest puzzle to solve, "I can reverse-engineer your craft to see what it is you do, so I'm not interested in that...no, I want to know why you were with that bounty hunter."

A quick glance at her belt and ammo garter confirmed that everything was removed from their pouches and slings. (Y/n) focused back on the man's face, a small snarl curling her lip upward, "That's none of your business."

The man took a drag from the brass attachment, exhaling as a thin smoke curled from his mouth and nostrils, wafting against (y/n)'s face as she caught her breath to not inhale any of the smoke. He clicked something into place on the attachment before clipping it back to his belt, a soft putter coming from the mechanism on his hat. Propping himself up by placing both hands on the arms of the chair, he leaned in dangerously close to (y/n) as the smoke continued to pour from his mouth.

"My business is to make sure that Lower Piers

stay in their place

."

"I'm not a Lower Pier anymore," (Y/n) gritted her teeth as her breath puffed through the smoke.

"I'd be convinced of that statement," A smug look curled his lips into a knowing smile, "if you had the brand removed from your skin."

(Y/n) tried to keep from externally wincing.

All Lower Piers were branded when they turned fourteen, the mark etched upon their skin as an upside down triangle, the shape divided into three sections with the lowest section bolded and containing a small cog. When Lower Piers had attained a certain social status, they could pay someone to remove the tattoo, but the procedure was expensive and only the higher-class of Middle Piers could afford such a price.

With a satisfied huff, the man stood back up and walked towards a table with various things scattered across it. He picked up a few small glass bottles full of red liquid, swirling them around as he watched the fluid inside light up with a dull orange glow.

"Your skills are pretty good, Lower Pier. If you work for me, I could remove your brand and pull you up within the ranks," He partially turned towards (y/n), the pipe attachment once again near his lips, "The only thing I ask in return is for you to make your creations solely for me."

(Y/n)'s eyes narrowed as she tensed her arms, once again testing the bonds holding her to the chair.

She knew the game he was playing. She heard it too many times before from others that found themselves in this situation: an Upper Pier offers freedom from the tattoo in exchange for exclusive labor, only to break the deal and never remove the brand, discarding the Lower Pier when they exhausted their use.

"Fuck off."

"Feisty answer," He took a drag from the attachment, clicking one of the gears on it into place before exhaling the smoke, "Then I'll phrase it another way: do what I ask and your friends from earlier won't come to harm."

"Me is finished, Atsushi," The first voice from before called out as someone else entered the room, "Our trail is gone."

"Just in time, Iyami," The man in the top hat smiled at the newcomer, his fingers clicking the attachment onto his belt as the floor lurched upwards. Both men braced themselves as it evened out in a steady rise, leaving (y/n) to wonder if she was on an airship or similar craft. There were no windows in the room she was currently in, so she could only guess that she was close to the belly of the airship or possibly in one of the cargo areas.

"Me has given the go-ahead to the others," Iyami, the thin reedy man, reached up and pulled a little at the cartoonishly small mustache sitting above his massive overbite.

"That's fine. I'll contact the doctor and tell him that there's an additional patient," The look in Atsushi's eyes sent a chill down (y/n)'s spine, making her test the strength of the ropes one more time before giving up on tearing through them with just her raw strength.

Without a word of acknowledgement, Iyami turned on his heel and walked past (y/n), presumably through the only door into the room which confirmed her suspicion of being in a low foot-traffic area. Atsushi gave a

final look at everything on the table before turning his attention once more to (y/n).

"Your skill is commendable and the quality of what you make is pretty high," He strode towards the chair she was tied to, placing a hand on her shoulder that she violently shook off, "It's a shame that all of that talent is stuck inside a Lower Pier."

Without another word, he continued walking past her and closed the door behind him after he left the room, leaving (y/n) in muted silence as she tried to knock the chair over. Throwing all of her weight into the arms, she couldn't sway it an inch nor could she unhook either of her legs from their binds. Confirming that her forearm bracers were removed, she sank into the seat until her head rested on the back, the awkward position making it impossible to slide off.

"Detective, there is a call waiting for you," The receptionist spoke softly as he entered the main lobby. He tucked his top hat underneath his arm as he dipped his head in acknowledgement, moving towards his office near the back of the station. Setting the hat on a rack, he sat down at his desk as the phone began to ring with its inner brass bell. Picking up the receiver off of its cradle, he cushioned the earpiece against his ear before speaking.

"Detective Todomatsu."

"

Totty!

" The voice on the other end nearly yelled, slight interference in the transmission as the voice clipped in and out.

"Speaking," Todomatsu pulled the phone slightly away from his ear, a small look of annoyance settling on his face.

"

Do you have anyone close to the 9th District?

" The familiar voice of the bounty hunter asked, making Todomatsu turn in his office chair to look at the sprawling map of Akatsuka City and see where his patrols were stationed. All eleven districts of the city were vast, and the 9th District had the heaviest air traffic due to it being the port for commerce. He had three patrols stationed in that District alone.

"They may not be available for your hunt, Karamatsu."

"

I've lost track of Iyami and Atsushi,

" The bounty hunter explained his situation without being asked, "T

heir trail leads towards the 9th District, but I can't locate them beyond that. Can you put a high alert for them?

"

"I'm not sure if I'm able to. I've got quite a few meetings to attend and discuss some repercussions with a certain scientist," Todomatsu picked up his quill, finding it more interesting than the conversation as his index finger ghosted over the vanes.

"

Please! (Y/n) is missing, and we think that they took her,

" The desperation in his voice was almost heartbreaking, but Todomatsu frowned as his eyes narrowed.

"It's not my responsibility to find your partner after you begged me to bring her on the contract," He slid the quill back in its stand, "You agreed that you'd keep an eye on her and wouldn't let her get in the way of my job."

There was partial silence on the other end of the line, "

You damn Upper Piers...

"

With a click, the line died between the two men. Todomatsu set down the receiver with a huff, letting silence fill the office for a short while before he picked up the receiver again and turned a number into the rotary wheel. The line clicked live and one of his patrol supervisors picked up the other line, Todomatsu quickly giving the new secondary instructions to the group.

Letting a breath hiss between his teeth, the detective stood up and stalked out of his office, grabbing the top hat on his way towards the temporary holding cells. Passing the smaller desks of the police officers, he waved his badge for entrance through the secure door, giving a slight nod to the officer standing guard near the cells.

A short burst of laughter rang out as he passed through the doorway, the row of barred holding cells empty except for the one furthest to the left. Inside was a man wearing a heavily stained white lab coat that ended close to the floor, the sleeves long enough to cover his hands. The frilled white shirt was tucked into light brown shorts held up with suspenders, exposing his bandaged legs and mismatched boots, one clearly shorter than the other.

"You need me," The prisoner laughed, holding one of his sleeves in front of his wide smile.

"You know what's going on, then," Todomatsu frowned slightly, rubbing a finger along the rim of the top hat.

"Contract went wrong in a way you didn't expect," The sleeve slowly lowered from the man's mouth, exposing more of his wide smile, "Only reason why you'd come here before my interview."

"Maybe your interview was moved forwar-"

"Not possible. Not with you," The man interrupted, "You're too strict when it comes to scheduling. You wouldn't clear your afternoon even if the office was on fire."

Todomatsu stayed silent, eyeing the man warily before fidgeting with his augmented monocle hanging from his jacket breast pocket. The man was too smart for his own good and would've made a wonderful scientist if he had the moral filters of a normal human. It was unfortunate to see such intelligence press forward in an unsanctioned field of science...

"You know of Atsushi Kanemochi?"

"I know of his work," The man hummed in confirmation, reaching out to the bars of his cells and gripping them tightly, his piercing dark eyes never leaving Todomatsu's face.

"Someone has run into trouble while approaching him," The rim of the faded pink top hat seemed a lot more interesting to look at, but Todomatsu kept his eyes on the man, "If I employ you in a temporary contract, I can find a way to clear you of your highest charge."

The man narrowed his eyes, the smile fading into a frown as he let go of the bars to step back a little further into the holding cell.

"Three charges, then we have a deal."

"I can only guarantee one."

"One charge,

and

I get to keep whatever research I find without you confiscating them."

Todomatsu silently clicked his tongue, "I can always ask your assistant for help, Jyushimatsu. Homura is always willing to do some dirty work."

"No!" The man ran back to the bars, pressing his face against them as it twisted into an angry expression.

"It'll have to be one or the other. Your highest charge dropped, or I talk to your assistant," Todomatsu slipped the monocle back into its holding pocket, confident that he had Jyushimatsu right where he wanted him.

"

...fine.

"

"Little Ichi..."

The mechanic didn't stop his eyes from rolling as the drawling voice whined from the back door, hearing something being hauled in manually. Readjusting the smoking pipe in his mouth, he set down the screwdriver to pick up the soldering iron, steadying his hands as he put the finishing touches on his newest gadget. Sensing someone behind him, he quickly pulled the hot iron away from his work in time to feel a hand on his shoulder, rocking him from side to side.

Swiftly turning, the mechanic clicked his tongue and brandished the soldering iron like a dagger, thrusting it towards the person to get them to back off. His right eye registered the red jacket of the uninvited visitor, turning off the iron in his hand before focusing on the person.

"I broke it again, Ichimatsu...I need you to fix it," Osomatsu whined while dramatically leaning over the seat of his vehicle.

"Stop pushing it so hard," Ichimatsu slid out of his chair and meandered his way towards the flying bike contraption, taking a long inhale of the smoking pipe, "If it's the same problem as last time, I'm charging double."

"What? Why?"

"Call it the 'stupid tax'. Keep ignoring my warnings and I'll be an Upper Pier in no time," He leaned down towards the mechanism under the steering handles, seeing a thick black liquid drip slowly between two pipes, "...same problem."

"That's not fair...She responded to me better this time," Osomatsu sat on the ground heavily, folding his arms as he looked his machine over like it was a

puzzle to be solved.

"She's still a first generation machine," Ichimatsu exhaled the smoke as he dragged a large toolbox over to the flying vehicle, setting the smoking pipe onto its flat top and shifting the eyeglass strapped around his left eye until the glass lenses zoomed in to a comfortable distance, "You keep pressing her hard on the takeoff and she'll fall right out of the sky."

"Then I'll pay you to make me a better one."

Ichimatsu could hear the smile on Osomatsu's voice, closing off the flow between the two pipes as he stripped the section that was leaking oil. Confirming that the section had a hairline fracture along its length, he reached towards the toolbox and pulled out a caliper, adjusting the jaw to settle on the thickness of the pipe. Taking mental notes on the dimensions of the pipe, he stood up from his work and shuffled over to the scrap metal pile standing in the corner of his workspace, quickly digging through and measuring out a slightly thicker pipe.

"I'm not a builder, just a mechanic."

"You built your own thing, so why can't you build something for me?"

"Because I don't

want

to."

The radio crackled to life, distracting Osomatsu from responding as the news anchor began the early evening readout. The frequency wasn't really clear in the lower parts of the city, but it was still audible as the anchor read through smaller articles. After the anchor droned on about gold prices and future events, he eventually turned to the larger topics like the burning zeppelin from this morning. There were no casualties, but quite a few people were injured when it landed in the city. An investigation was going on about who it belonged to, what happened to make it catch fire, and why it was cleared for launch from the dock with signs of incineration present.

"I wonder if she's okay..."

"Your bike is fine," Ichimatsu answered in a monotone.

"No, I meant (y/n). She was in there because she was working with Karamatsu on hunting someone down," Osomatsu's smile faded as the memory of Karamatsu performing CPR on her replayed in his mind.

"Ah, the 'oxygen' question. Right," Ichimatsu ran the metal pipe along some kind of machine, pressing the ends into it before blowing off the metal dust. Taking the caliper again and re-measuring the thickness on each end, he moved back to the flying bike and pulled out a wrench and flathead, his hands disappearing into the guts of the machine.

"Just makes me wonder if they've caught him yet."

"Would've made the news if they did."

Osomatsu tensed a little, realizing that the criminal reports had already been read and neither Atsushi's nor Iyami's name had been mentioned, meaning their contract was still active. As if sensing the tension, Ichimatsu pulled his hands out, dragging out the tools he had worked with.

"You're done. Got the money, or do I need to add it to the tab?" Tossing the tools onto the workbench, he removed the eyeglass to look at Osomatsu. The criminal was still frozen on the ground, his face betraying what he was thinking about.

Giving a small sigh, Ichimatsu pulled out a small pad of paper and wrote a figure down using the oil that was still clinging to his fingers, tearing it off and tossing it into a drawer full of similar papers.

"She can handle a few emergency takeoffs now, but don't push her too hard," Ichimatsu lightly kicked Osomatsu in the shin, bringing the jacketed man back to reality as the smoking pipe found its home between Itchimatsu's lips, "Next time, I'm not gonna work on your piece of crap until you pay off your tab."

"Ichimatsu, thanks," Without muttering anything else, Osomatsu hauled his flying machine outside the workshop and started it up. Jumping into the seat, he took off into the sky and vanished from Ichimatsu's sight.

"Last chance, Lower Pier."

Her face stung but her back hurt more, forced into a forward leaning position from the custom-built chair she was tethered to. The lashings she was getting felt like they were growing more and more severe the longer she didn't give in to Atsushi's and Iyami's demands. She couldn't expect any tender action from either of them.

Atsushi was an Upper Pier and Iyami was a Middle Pier. Neither caste gave half a shit about the Lower Piers unless it suited their needs, so she clearly fulfilled something within their plans. (Y/n) bit the inside of her cheek, not wanting to cry out in pain and show weakness to these two men, holding out as long as she could for something to happen, for someone to notice where she was.

The airship had landed long ago and she had been taken from its belly into a building that was far away from Akatsuka City. The building seemed abandoned, perfect for a stereotypical hideaway for anyone that didn't want to attract the attention of the law.

Atsushi walked around to squat in front of (y/n) with the pipe attachment hanging between his lips.

"You're a smart girl, (y/n), so I'm willing to bend a little here," The smoke trailed from his mouth as he spoke, the sweet smell partially numbing the pain she was feeling, "You neutralized my most potent anesthesia in a matter of seconds with your powder. The liquid you threw was rather powerful stuff, despite engineering it to be anonymous so I couldn't determine what it was until it was almost too late."

He blew out a lungful of smoke into her face, his lips curling into a smile. The smell was nearly sickening with how sweet it was. It was like being

plunged into a sugar vat filled with overly ripe fruit.

"I want that kind of intelligence under me and you need someone like me as your sponsor."

"I said 'no'. Is English too hard for you to understand?" (Y/n) exhaled some of the smoke back into Atsushi's face, the smile disappearing into a neutral mask.

"Very well," He stood up and turned towards a nearby table with several devices that looked like remote detonation transponders, "The only word that should leave your mouth next is a number between one and six."

"Fuck you," (Y/n) spat towards Atsushi's feet before an explosion rocked the building, the smell of chemicals flooding the air and choking out any other smell. Harshly coughing, (y/n) recoiled as another explosion ripped through one of the nearby walls, debris and rubble scattering across the floor and hitting the opposite wall.

"

I found you!

" Someone yelled with open laughter, a familiar 'pop' sounding before glass shattered near Atsushi's feet, a clear liquid spreading and glowing red hot before bursting in a violent reaction. The heat of the explosion almost seared (y/n)'s face as she turned away to avoid the flashpoint.

"Dammit! What are you doing free!?" Atsushi yelled from somewhere in the dust cloud, giving a small cough before a white billowing cloud spread from within the dust cover.

"Ahaha!" The man only laughed in response as he flew in from the right of (y/n)'s vision and spun around while landing, the long lab coat partially clearing the white cloud filling the nearly destroyed room. A large machine was strapped to his back, a bunsen burner warming up a large beaker of yellow liquid that rested in a cradle on top of the machine. Several multi-colored vials were attached to the white lab coat as he turned to fan the

smoke out. The man glanced towards (y/n) before reaching for something behind her, a sharp tug on her wrists was felt before the restraints vanished.

"You're--"

"Jyushimatsu," He gave a wide smile as his eyes closed, "Entrance should be clear now."

"If

you're

here, then that means--" Atsushi started, his voice lowering into a growl.

"

Atsushi!

" Another voice howled, much rougher than Atsushi's growl. A whirl of blades could be heard before the wind picked up, blowing the cloud cover around and away as someone landed from above, shoving debris out of their way before the machine attached to their back dropped them to the ground. A cane swung around in their hand before raising to Atsushi's eye level, the wind calming down as the bladed machine slowed to a stop.

"Detective!" Atsushi laughed a little as he was fully exposed to the new combatant, raising the pipe to his lips, "To what do I owe the unpleasantness of your rare company?"

(Y/n) used the distraction to slip away from the room, her back protesting the movement after sitting too long. She pushed through the collapsed doorway and found herself in an open space, recognizing that she had been led through here from the outside. Retracing her steps, (y/n) found herself heading towards a destroyed door, the ceiling completely collapsed and blocking off the route.

"Going somewhere?"

Someone grabbed her wrist and spun her to face them, greeted with Iyami's face as a dark look passed through his eyes. (Y/n) yanked her arm down as hard as she could, using her other arm to push Iyami away from her. His grip was tighter than she expected, despite how thin he was.

"Let me go!" If she had her tools with her, then she'd be able to escape.

More bad luck...!

"Me can't do that," Iyami chuckled, "You need to agree to the terms before me can let you go."

"You'll never get with the ladies with that kind of attitude," An arm wrapped around her shoulders as the hand gently rubbed her upper arm near the joint, "No wonder you're always alone, Iyami."

"Todomat--" Iyami choked as he took a step back.

"It's Osomatsu, you swine!" The red-jacketed criminal interrupted, swiftly driving his other hand towards Iyami's hand on (y/n)'s wrist, separating the two and pulling her towards himself, "How do you always manage to forget that we're different people?"

"Don't be so harsh on him," Another familiar voice called out behind the pair, a dirtied Karamatsu stepping into view with the shotgun resting on his shoulders, "Similar names tend to get confused easily."

"I should sign a petition for you all to change your names..." Osomatsu grumbled as he slightly pushed (y/n) behind him, "Choromatsu is just outside. He can give you a lift to the doctor."

"No way! I'm fighting with you guys," (Y/n) clenched her fists.

"With

what

? You don't have anything on you," Osomatsu glanced back at her, her face twisting in frustration, "Go to the doctor's and get checked up. We may not

look like much, but I'll be fine."

"Don't ignore me!" Iyami yelled as he pulled out a pistol from a sling around his waist, aiming it towards the three. A shot rang out as (y/n) was pushed to the ground, the bullet slamming into something soft and splattering warm liquid against the ground near her. She looked up in shock to see both Osomatsu and Karamatsu standing in front of her, but she couldn't tell which one the bullet had hit.

"Get going, (y/n)!" Karamatsu glanced down at her, the shotgun moving from his shoulders into a firing position. She could only nod, scrambling up and running towards a small opening that the two seemed to have used as an entrance.

Pushing herself through the wall, (y/n) saw the smoldering ruins of the airship that had brought her here, someone darting around the perimeter and taking pictures of the burning hull. The green color of their outfit was hard to see against the fading light of the sunset and the fire, but the telltale hoverboard nearby told her instantly who it was.

"Choromatsu...!" She called out as more gunshots fired in the building behind her, ducking down instinctively. The reporter turned towards her and put the camera away, rushing over and hovering his hands by her arms, unsure if he should touch her.

"(Y/n)! They got you out...!" Choromatsu's lips thinned, "When we saw two others dive into the building before those explosions went off, we didn't know if you'd be okay."

"I'm out now..." She grabbed his right upper arm, her hand shaking with adrenaline, "But I need a doctor, okay?"

"Right...uh," He glanced towards his hoverboard, "I don't know if I can carry you on my vehicle..."

"It should be big enough for two people," (Y/n) looked over at the vehicle, "I'll just hold really tight to you, and we should be fine as long as you don't make any sudden moves."

He only nodded as he walked her over to the board, kicking the steam engine to life by locking his boots in place and holding the vehicle steady as she settled right behind him, holding his breath as her arms held onto his waist tightly. Feeling her nod against his back, Choromatsu carefully guided the board into the sky and whisked her away towards the Middle Pier districts, knowing which doctor to take her to.

(Y/n) woke up to the hiss of a compressor filling with air before squeezing it out, the pattern quite rhythmic and soothing. The starch white ceiling and walls of the room she was in was a pleasant departure from the building she found herself in last night, feeling her limbs twitch in response to her being awake. Moving her right hand up to her forehead, she felt a thin tube extend from her inner arm, giving it a glance before realizing that she was being drip-fed some kind of saline solution.

"You're awake," A man leaned into her field of vision, his dark eyes familiar before her memory clicked to life. Karamatsu, the bounty hunter that she was partnered with temporarily for the contract that dealt with toxins.

"Lucky me, huh?" Her voice was raspy.

"Yeah, it was a bit of a rough day for you, huh?" He lifted a hand a little, unsure of where to put it before fully raising it to the back of his head, "Listen, your funds have been transferred at the percentage we agreed to and you got a bit of a bonus from the other bounty."

"Did everything else go okay?"

"Yeah," He nodded enthusiastically, "We caught both of them, so they're not going to be bothering anyone for a long while. The detective and scientist that helped free you wanted to pass on their well-wishes, since they both had business to attend to...and the detective, Todomatsu, said that if you needed additional field training then he'd be willing to help out."

(Y/n) shook her head a little, "Nice offer, but no...I think I'm gonna crawl back into my home lab and stay there for quite a while. I've had enough action and life-threatening endeavors to last me the rest of my natural lifespan."

"Completely understandable," Karamatsu agreed, "Being a bounty hunter can be pretty rough for those not used to it."

His words hung heavy in the air, as if he was wanting to finish some thought. Before (y/n) could ask what was wrong, Karamatsu continued.

"I know it was rough and the people we dealt with were just as abrasive, but I enjoyed completing the bounty with you. It's probably not your cup of tea, but...would I be able to enlist you again if your services are ever needed?"

(Y/n) let her answer tumble around in her head. Yes, it was a breath of fresh air to go outside her lab and take a walk on the wild side every once in a while, but she still wasn't sure about doing it as often as Karamatsu was probably indicating. She smiled as her mind settled on a satisfying sentence.

"I'll think about it."

Naga!Brothers and Reader

(There is a standalone story of this one-shot, published under 'Subject To Study'. Go check it out!)

I could hear the snickering of my 'co-workers' as I made my way towards one of the large enclosures within the zoo, shaking my head a little as their mutterings barely reached my ears.

They were mocking me. They always had since I was forced to start working here for what could barely be described as 'minimum wage'.

Lifting the large bucket full of chopped meat into the crook of my elbow, I reached for the employee's entrance to the enclosure, swiftly opening the door and closing it behind me as catcalls and whistles followed me in. I followed the cobblestone path deeper into the large enclosure, keeping an eye on the overhead boughs before spotting a red-scaled tail slowly flicking back and forth, almost in a beckoning motion. I reached up and gently ran a finger down the scales, feeling the tail flinch a little before moving out of my reach.

Soon enough, the upper torso of a human male lowered himself from the cover of the thick upper foliage, his deep red eyes looking around me before settling on my form underneath him. His messy dark hair looked to be partially combed back, as if he was trying to run his fingers through his hair before I distracted him. His eyes partially closed in pleasure before falling closer to me, revealing the waistline that blended human and snake together.

"Good morning, (y/n)..." He yawned as the muscles of his lower body slowed his descent, curling around me in a loose pile until all seven feet of his tail was within the circle, propping himself up on his own coils.

"Good morning, Oso," I shifted the bucket in my arm, the weight started to make my muscles ache, "I've got your breakfast-slash-dinner ready for

you."

"Lemme guess," He barely opened his mouth to slide his long, forked tongue out, the ends waving in the air for a little bit before he pulled the muscle back in, "Beef mixed with chicken and fish."

"Close. I snuck in a treat," Without gagging, I reached deep into the bucket and pulled out the limp body of a blue-tongued skink. I held it out as I watched Oso's eyes contract into wide black discs, taking in every detail about what he saw. He lunged for the skink, catching the head in his mouth as he tightened his coils in excitement, greedily chewing on the lizard before swallowing it.

"Where did you get it...?" Oso turned his gaze towards me, the pupils constricting back into their normal round shapes again.

"I didn't get it from one of the exhibits here, if you're curious," I held out the bucket to him, "I've still got to feed the others, so just leave the bucket by the door as usual."

"They're doing okay?" He easily lifted the bucket from my hands, grabbing a handful of meat before popping it into his mouth, "Are

they

treating you well?"

"Your clutchmates are doing fine, and...my treatment isn't getting worse," I hesitated a little bit, "I'm still trying to find a way to get you guys out of here..."

"There's no rush, (y/n)."

That's what Oso always said, but I knew he was itching to get out of here just as much as his clutchmates, his five other brothers. It was my fault for them being put in here as a freakshow exhibition, and it was my job to get them out and back to their homeland. I mindlessly ran a hand over Oso's black scales, admiring the coloration as the pure blood red color that

surrounded his waist blended into an iridescent black before fading back into the red as the scales grew closer to the tail.

Naga.

That's what Oso and his brothers were. Creatures of fantasy thought to never have existed.

I felt his muscles partially constrict under my hand, as if trying to make me pet his scales faster by moving my hand for me. I gave him a final pat before climbing out of his coils, looking back at him before heading back towards the door.

Closing the heavy door behind me, I was ambushed by the two men from before who were snickering at me.

"So, what did you guys do this time? A little bit of touching and

squeezing

?"

"It's none of your business, Karl," I shoved his arm off and walked towards the kitchen, intent on making the other five meals for the other clutchmates.

"I bet you were moaning in there for the snake, begging him 'please, Mr. Snake, you treat me so poorly, be nice to me today'," Raoul, the other man, mocked my voice in a singsong tone, folding his hands together in a begging motion.

"Don't you have other people to bother? You know...ones that don't deal with sentient creatures that can kill a human?" My thinly veiled threat seemed to throw them off, if only for a little bit.

"Yeah, whatever."

"More like a snake whore than a snake charmer."

Both men walked off, and left me in relative peace to finish my duties as the naga caretaker -- the only one in this sham of a zoo. Taking a second bucket to another door nearby, I opened it and caught my breath as the climate changed from air-conditioned and cool to muggy and humid. Following a similar path down to a large but shallow manmade river, I couldn't help but laugh at the naga lounging within the cool waters, his face completely relaxed until he heard me laugh.

"...(y/n)?"

"Sorry, Kara. I haven't seen you soak in a while," I set the bucket full of meat down and knelt next to the rocky riverbank, giving the naga space to wake up and stretch.

His pure black scales were hard to see underneath the water's surface, gleaming in the artificial light as the scales breached the water and rested on the flat rocks. His long dark hair was tied back into a ponytail, fully decorated with blue gems and gold jewelry that he had asked from me. The decorations were sparse on his head but were on full display around his neck, arms, and wrists, with a blue jeweled clasp pinning a flowing silk scarf around his waist, covering up where his scales met his human skin.

"They felt dry and I could only hazard a guess that I'm getting ready to shed, so I wanted to get a head start on the process and just--" His slim tongue forked out, "Do I smell egg?"

"You caught me. I wanted it to be a surprise, but..." I dug into the bucket and pulled out three raw eggs, holding them out for Kara, "I can't hide any kind of food from you guys."

He gently took them from my hand, smelling them with his tongue before swallowing them whole, one by one. Leaning down to the river, he took a long drink as if wanting to help push the eggs down his gullet faster. I shifted the bucket closer to him while he was preoccupied with the treats, careful to not bump his tail as he created loose coils for a seat. After finishing his drink, Kara stretched once more and leaned over the bucket, picking it up and inspecting the contents.

"I know it's not what you'd usually have out there, but it's all that the committee will allow me to give to you," I explained when I saw slight disappointment cross his face.

"

Non, non,

it's not the food I'm sad about," He shook his head before looking at me, "It's the limited amount of time I get with you."

"I know..." I frowned slightly, "I've got your four other clutchmates to feed, and they want the whole process done in less than an hour."

Kara remained silent as he started to eat from the bucket, his eyes narrowed in thought before looking at me.

"You don't need to stay here any longer than you need to, (y/n). Go tend to my clutchmates," He swallowed a mouthful of meat before smiling at me, "I can keep myself entertained until you come back."

I gave him a thankful smile before gently rubbing his head, careful to stay away from his mouth. Moving back towards the door, I closed it behind me and quickly grabbed two more of the feeding buckets, hauling them towards two of the enclosures surrounding the kitchen prep area. Ducking into one of the enclosures, I placed the feeding bucket on a flat platform, looking over to see a pale lavender coil move slightly behind one of the rock outcroppings.

"Just leave the bucket by the door when you're done, Ichi," I softly called out to the shy naga. We never really had time to create a friendship before this all happened, and recent events shattered any possibility of one ever forming between us. I still treated him with care on his check-ups and didn't touch him if I didn't have to. He seemed to be the most damaged one out of the nagas, emotionally speaking.

Closing the service door to Ichi's enclosure, I swiftly moved to the next one and positioned the food bucket within the designated area, feeling smooth

coils wrap around my legs and slightly tighten as a pair of arms hugged my shoulders from behind.

"You're late..." A light voice whispered in my ear, his forked tongue dancing across my neck.

"Sorry, Todo," I reached behind me and gently rubbed the naga's cheek, "My mornings are always a rush to get everything done on time."

"You don't have to do what they tell you," The naga leaned forward, partially leaning some of his weight on my back as he rubbed his other cheek against mine.

"If I don't follow their demands, you know what will happen to you guys..."

"Ah, that's right: the reliable death threat," His arms released my shoulders as he moved around my right side, leaning further forward to start picking at the food, "You'd think they'd be a little smarter than that."

"Todo, don't let them hear you say that," I put my index finger to my lips, "You'll get me into a lot more trouble than I do for myself."

"You know that those locks are flimsy and can easily be broken," His slitted pupils darted in the direction of the service door.

"And you know that I'm their leverage against you, just as you all are to me," I took a step out of his loosened coils, "Just...trust me, okay? I'm trying to find a way to get you guys out of here."

"I know," He gave me a wink before turning his full attention to the food, finding the treat I slipped inside just as easily as the others had.

Two more...

Locking the door behind me, I made one final trip to the prep area, grabbing the last two buckets and setting them down in front of their respective doors. Resting my hand on one of the handles, I took a breath before opening it.

A lush jungle expanded before me, a cobblestone pathway making it easy to traverse through the dense foliage. I kept my breathing quiet, walking as silently as I could through the enclosure. The last time I was in here, the naga was actively shedding and getting agitated and angry at anything I did. Kara would go through that same phase, but not as badly as his clutchmate.

I heard a long hiss above me, freezing in my tracks as I slowly looked up to see the irritated green naga glaring down at me. His chest was expanding and contracting slowly, hissing a warning through his partially opened lips with each breath. I noticed that his scales were dark green and dull, my breath hitching as I realized that he had a stuck shed.

No wonder he'd been so irritable.

I'd have to get up close and personal, but I couldn't risk him getting hurt by his own skin and I definitely couldn't feed him until his old skin was completely off.

"Choro..." I softly said his name, watching the green scales along his tail expand in response while the tip of his tail wiggled back and forth.

One very agitated and venomous naga versus its caretaker.

"Choro," I whispered again, setting the food bucket down and slowly turning to face him in the branches above me, "I need to get that skin off you."

"It hurts," He partially growled, the tone sounding more like a whimper.

"I know it does," I raised both of my arms up to him slowly, "Do you need me to carry you to the pond?"

His round pupils widened and I froze, locking my body in place as he calmed himself down from an attack. One bite from his fangs and I was dead in under a minute.

I had no room for error.

Choro slowly dropped down, taking it an inch at a time before lowering himself into my raised arms, wrapping his long tail around my shoulders and waist. His head was pressed against my neck underneath the rest of his body, his chest still expanding with partial hisses.

"I'm going to start moving," I barely whispered, not wanting to set him off. Slowly tiptoeing around the food bucket, I took the path step-by-step to the soaking pond he had in the back of his enclosure, away from the prying eyes of the zoo visitors. I made sure to not stumble or drop him an inch, taking in a breath of relief when the toes of my work boots rested on the edge of the pond.

It was completely clean and untouched.

"We're here, Choro," I spoke softly again, feeling him hiss in response before worming his way through his own coils and into the pond, just as slow as when he lay on me. I kept still until he released the tip of his tail from my upper arm, gently kneeling next to the pond.

His tail was completely submerged as his human torso rested on one of the larger flat stones near the bank, his head laying on his crossed arms.

"Wait in here for thirty minutes," I gave him a smile, "I'll be back to help with that stuck shed, and feed you after that."

"Thirty minutes is a long time..." His voice was almost in his usual tone. The cold water must've felt soothing to his scales, "Promise you'll be back?"

"It's my job to take care of you. I don't think they'll keep me from helping you stay healthy," I resisted the urge to touch his arm, knowing that he could snap back into attack mode in a millisecond. Slowly walking away from Choro, I picked up the food bucket and locked the door behind me, shoving the bucket into the fridge to preserve the meat just a little bit longer.

I looked to the last enclosure and took a breath before opening the door.

"(Y/n)!"

I was tackled outside the enclosure, the food bucket knocked from my hands as a strong pair of arms wrapped around my chest. I laughed a little as I looked down at the naga, his cheerful smile brightening my day after the scare of Choro's stuck shed.

"Jyushi...!" I hugged him back before he pulled me up from the floor, not releasing his hug. His large, thick coils wrapped around both of us on the concrete floor, "Wait a moment, okay? I'm gonna get in trouble if they see you outside."

"Oh!" He nodded in understanding before dragging me back inside his enclosure, settling into the hug again when his entire body was just past the door frame, "Better?"

"A little, but now I can't reach your food," I patted his head before pointing to the discarded bucket, some of the meat chunks laying on the ground.

A sound of surprise came from his chest, releasing me and heading back out the door to gather his food. He lifted the bucket with no effort, chewing the pieces that had fallen out as he closed the door on his way in. Licking his lips in satisfaction, he busied himself with eating the rest, crying out in joy as he came across the rabbit I had snuck in there for him. I was left to admire the yellow and white scales of his tail, always fond of the albino reticulated pattern he was born with.

A dull thud sounded as he dropped the empty bucket by the door, moving back to me and giving another hug when he was within arms reach.

"You're the best, (y/n)!"

"I try to be," I returned the hug, feeling his coils tightening around me again. He had learned to be careful, almost killing me when we first encountered each other as his excitement got the better of him.

"I smell everyone else on you," I felt his tongue dance across my face, "Are they doing well?"

"Everyone but Choro. He needs help with his stuck shed," I ran my fingers through Jyushi's messy hair, "Kara is starting to go into his blue phase, but he's never really had a problem with it."

"Give Choro a hug from me!" Jyushi squeezed a little tighter, as if to emphasize his actions, "...if he lets you, I mean."

"If he lets me, then I'll pass on your hug."

I gave myself another few minutes being held by Jyushi before climbing out of his thick coils, disappointment written all over his face as I prepared to leave. I reassured him that I'd be back later on, taking the empty bucket and setting it in the sink.

Now to deal with an agitated green mamba Naga...

I grabbed a small pair of tweezers to help peel off the stuck shed before turning towards Choro's door, seeing it partially open.

My blood ran cold as a single thought overwrote everything else in my mind:

I had closed the door after I left that enclosure.

I pulled it open further to see someone vanish into the thick bush of the artificial jungle.

"Hey...!" I whispered as loudly as I could to try and get their attention without bothering Choro, hoping that I could keep the person from harm. Closing the door, I followed quietly and found a man laying out the chopped meat from the fridge, grumbling to himself about someone not doing their job.

"Put that back...!" I quietly ordered, catching his attention finally.

Raoul. He had no business being here.

"What the fuck were you doing?" His normal tone sounded like yelling in the stillness, making me wince a little, "Just feed these things and move on

with your job...or were you too busy getting it on with one of them?"

"Shut up and leave," I kept whispering, hoping he'd get the hint to not be loud, "You're not even in the herp field, so get out of my job."

"These freaks aren't in the herp field, either," Raoul jabbed a thumb towards the enclosure, drawing my attention to a hidden Choro as he stared at Raoul's back like he'd just found prey. I took a sharp breath in, trying to shush Raoul.

"Seriously, stop..."

"The fuck are you freaking out for?" He dumped the rest of the bucket onto the ground, the meat partially picking up the dirt, "You're not paid to fuck snakes."

Choro's pupils dilated as his back hunched over, the few feet of tail under him curling in a tight 'S' shape.

Last chance to save Raoul.

I pulled at Raoul's arm, forcing him to drop the empty bucket and trying to push him towards the door, shoving myself between him and Choro.

"Get off me!" He smacked my arm away from him, taking a few steps back towards the door before I heard rustling foliage behind me.

I quickly turned around to see Choro swerving around me, his mouth open and fully exposing his fangs, a set of three on either side of his upper jaw. Raoul screamed as I grabbed onto Choro's waist when he passed me, killing the naga's speed and dragging him to the floor.

"Run!" I cried out as Choro hissed at me, grabbing me with his hands and trying to pull me off of him. I knew that he was in pain from his already tight skin and I wasn't doing him any favors by holding on. His long tail thrashed around behind us as Raoul disappeared towards the door, the tail sometimes hitting my legs or head to try and get me to let go. When I heard the door close, I immediately released Choro, backing up as he recovered

from his failed attack. His fangs folded back into his mouth, but his hisses grew louder.

"Why did you stop me?"

"You can't kill anyone here..." I panted as I rubbed the areas where he hit me with his tail, knowing that they'd turn into bruises, "You can't..."

"He was berating you!" A loud hiss passed through his teeth, his finger pointing towards the door.

"Choro...if you hurt or kill anyone here...I won't be able to take care of you all anymore...!" I cried out in frustration, instantly sucking in a breath as I realized what I said.

"...what?" The hisses stopped in an instant, a shocked look passing over Choro's face.

"The committee wants you all to be obedient to them and it's my life on the line," I looked over, standing up and calmly walking towards him before gently resting a hand on his old skin, "If I continue to care for you and keep you all healthy, then nothing happens to you...if you do anything to hurt anyone...then they don't have a use for me, since...they'll get rid of you."

"(Y/n)...why didn't you say anything?" Choro winced a little as my hand passed over the scales.

"How

could

I say anything...? I want to get you all out of here, but I can't do that if the committee suspects me of telling you anything that alters your behavior," I pulled my hand away, "I can't just leave the doors open and have you guys attack the people here..."

"Then, what can we do?"

"I don't know..." I bit back a cry, "I don't know..."

"How about...we start with my soak...?" Choro moved away from me, slowly heading back to the pond as he looked over his shoulder at me. I wiped away the tears in my eyes before meeting his gaze.

"That's a good place to start."

Daddy!Brothers and Teacher!Reader

Inspired by AliceWoodsWriter's prompt.

A long swig from the cold beer stein was what he needed to finish off the busy day, an index finger loosening his necktie as he closed his eyes in contentment. Feeling the chilled alcohol hit his empty stomach, he knew that he was going to crash hard tonight. He needed to after his boss put him through the ringer at the office. Setting the stein down on the table, he looked over the letter that was sent home with his young daughter last month, pouring over every detail before the booze disabled his vision completely.

'October 12, 20XX

Dear Parents:

Forest Point Preschool will join the thousands of schools nationwide in celebrating the XXth annual American Education Week from November 16-20, 20XX. As part of the celebration, we will be organizing "Parents Day" on Tuesday, November 17, 20XX, to provide you with a firsthand look at what the school day is like for your child. This initiative is designed to spotlight the importance of parental involvement in a child's education.

Our Parents Day will include a wide range of activities for parents to participate in, including storytime, coloring, and learning about the importance of sharing.

The activities taking place throughout the day will also reinforce American Education Week's tagline, "Reach. Educate. Inspire." The tagline represents NEA's vision of calling upon all Americans to do their part in making public schools great for every child so that they can grow and achieve in the 21st century.

We encourage you to participate in this important day. Please fill out the attached form to confirm your participation and return it to Bethany DeVan by November 1, 20XX.

Signed,

Robert Gignex

Principal'

He groaned a little as he set the mass-printed letter down, rubbing his forehead as his mind began to feel a little fuzzy. English was a second language for him, after all, and he still had some trouble reading the more complicated words.

His cell phone buzzed twice in rapid succession, drawing his attention to the thing resting face down on the table. Picking it up and looking at the screen, he saw a response to the text conversation he and his brothers had been having.

Finishing off the drink, he pushed the glass away before focusing on the messages.

'Parents Day is tomorrow, so no late-night drinking, Osomatsu!' A green-colored bubble warned him. He laughed before typing out 'too late' and sending a picture of the recently emptied glass.

The phone was silent for a moment before his ringtone shattered the silence in the apartment, the caller ID showing him that his third younger brother was calling. Osomatsu swore quietly before answering, keeping an ear towards a closed door nearby.

"Choromatsu, you're gonna get me in trouble!" Osomatsu partially laughed as he focused on the call, turning away from the door when he didn't hear anything past it.

"You're going to get yourself in trouble, crappy eldest..." Choromatsu's lighter voice commented on the other end of the line.

"Always seem to."

"Mia isn't watching you, is she?"

"No, she's asleep...despite you trying to wake her up with the call," Osomatsu partially closed an eye, looking back towards the door.

"I can only imagine how excited she is for tomorrow," Choromatsu sounded like he adjusted his phone, his voice coming through clearer, "Jade sure is. She's always excited to see her cousins at school."

"Think the teacher will be able to handle our kids?"

"Ms. (L/n) has dealt with them for a few months now. Jade absolutely loves her," Osomatsu heard a small cry on Choromatsu's side, "Shh, shh, shh. Daddy's got you."

"How's Kai?" Osomatsu lowered his voice, propping his chin up with his free hand.

"A handful as always, but we love him," Choromatsu laughed a little, "I'm gonna have to leave him with Katie, but I know she won't mind."

Osomatsu hummed, the image of Choromatsu's wedding coming to mind. His own ring finger was now devoid of the wedding band he'd worn for a year, pushing the divorce from four years ago out of his mind before he was tempted to pour another beer. One was his limit for the week.

"What about the others?" He scratched his jawline before looking back at the letter from the school.

"Let's see...Karamatsu is taking Hayden while Rebecca works their flower shop, I'm bringing Jade, Ichimatsu will be with Damien, Jyushimatsu is taking Lilah instead of Reese like they planned, and Totty is bringing Trevor," Choromatsu sounded like he was reading off messages between him and the others.

"Ah, damn...Ichimatsu finalized the process?" Osomatsu closed his eyes.

"This past Friday, yeah. Erika delivered the papers to his divorce lawyer," Choromatsu sounded just as sad as Osomatsu felt. They knew that the relationship was extremely rocky over the past few months, and had grown so toxic that the brothers feared for the couple's only son. Osomatsu leaned back in his chair, thinking of a day he had off so he could go drinking with Ichimatsu.

"Damn...I hope that it won't affect his mood tomorrow."

"I think he's more focused on Damien than anything else right now," Choromatsu sounded further away, a shifting of fabric barely heard on the other side, "There you go...Sleep well, Kai..."

Osomatsu waited for Choromatsu to speak again. His younger brother sighed into the phone.

"How has work been treating you?"

"Not much better, but the salary pays the bills and keeps Mia happy."

"That's as much as anyone can really ask for," Choromatsu partially laughed, "See you tomorrow, then?"

"Yeah, see you and the others tomorrow."

Osomatsu hung up the call, a small smile on his face. It would be one hell of a family reunion. Sextuplet brothers and their kids. He wondered how the teacher would react.

"Daddy! We're gonna be late!!"

Osomatsu felt two small hands grab at his sheets and try to shove him from side to side, smiling a little before sweeping his arm around the tiny form and bringing them close.

"Oh, no...Daddy is still so sleepy..."

A screech of laughter met his ears, the figure squirming around in his grip as he dragged them up to the bed, opening his eyes to see his daughter messily dressed in her clothes.

"Daddy, stop!" Her inherited smile widened as she looked at him, "Ms. (L/n) is gonna be mad if we're late!"

"That's so terrible!" Osomatsu spoke in a playful voice, "We better make sure we get there on time."

He lay his head back down on his pillow, snoring loudly before his face was hit with another pillow. Playfully choking from the unexpected hit, Osomatsu laughed as he sat up, raising the guilty party high in the air above him with both arms.

"You hit me!"

"No, I didn't...!" She squirmed in his hands, laughing as she tried to get away. Her brown hair was partially tied into a braid, gravity making it obvious that she did it herself. Osomatsu smiled proudly.

"All right, then. Let's get you ready to go," He set her down on the floor and tossed the bedsheets away from him, exposing his bare chest and pajama pants. Glancing at the clock next to his bed, he calculated that he had about fifteen minutes to get both of them ready before they needed to leave. Taking long strides behind Mia's excited run into her room, she jumped onto her little bed while Osomatsu pulled open the partially closed dresser drawers. Seeing the mess she made, he gently shook his head and turned back to her.

She was dressed in a bright pink t-shirt with frills on the sleeves, a prancing unicorn in the front that sparkled when light hit it. A pair of black overalls were haphazardly put on, some of the buttons done wrong while others were left open. There were no socks on her feet.

"Is that what you want to wear?" He put his hands on his waist, arching an eyebrow.

"Yeah! I like it," She nodded excitedly.

"All-righty. Come here and I'll make you pretty," He knelt down to her level, catching her as she ran towards him. He quickly fixed up the overalls and slipped on a pair of pink frilly socks to match the shirt. Undoing the braid she tried, he grabbed the brush off of her dresser and dragged it through her brown hair. It wasn't quite long enough yet for one big braid, so he vouched for a double dutch braided ponytail, apologizing when she complained about him yanking her hair around.

"Did you brush your teeth yet?" He glanced at the time. Five more minutes left.

"No..." Her voice dipped in honesty.

"Let's go ahead and do that, okay? Daddy will do it with you," He held her hand as they walked to the only bathroom in the apartment, setting the standing timer for one minute as they started to brush. She mimicked his every move, watching him constantly for direction like she always had. Rinsing out the remaining toothpaste, he helped wipe her mouth before telling her to put her shoes on and wait by the front door.

With Mia all taken care of, he quickly moved to his bedroom and grabbed the prepared outfit from his closet: a long-sleeved red shirt with a nice pair of black slacks. Running his fingers through his hair to comb it into place, Osomatsu tucked away his wallet and keys before helping Mia put her shoes on correctly, letting her out of the apartment first before closing the door and locking it behind them.

"You almost didn't make it," A familiar laugh called out as Osomatsu set Mia down in the front lobby, following her in towards her classroom. He looked to his left to see the second eldest sextuplet rubbing his hands with a paper towel, closing a bathroom door behind him.

"Karamatsu," Osomatsu held out his right hand and Karamatsu grasped it in his own, giving it a hearty shake before pulling away, "Where's Hayden?"

"Already in the class," Karamatsu jabbed a thumb towards the classroom that Mia had disappeared into, "Go on and sign in, the kids made custom name tags for their parents."

"Another thing to put in the scrapbook for Mia to see when she's a teenager," Osomatsu held up two fingers in a victory sign before walking towards the classroom, his ears picking out the voices of his nieces, nephews, and daughter.

The door opened to a normal-sized classroom, several children were talking with their parents or their friends while two adult women with nametags talked to the parents, mingling amongst each other while the teachers waited for the class to start. There were four rectangular tables with six chairs each pushed in around them and most of the chairs had a pouch slung over the back, the assigned child's name written in black Sharpie. A large wall-mounted TV was across from the shared 'desks', a sitting rug laid out in front of it with a rocking chair facing the rug.

Probably the storytime area,

Osomatsu thought to himself before his arm was jerked downwards, snapping his attention to Mia. A wide smile was on her face as she pointed towards one of the chairs.

"That's my spot, Daddy!" She tugged him towards the assigned chair, pulling it out and showing off the decorated pouch. The color of the pouch matched the theme of the room, despite being covered in smiley stickers and gold stars.

"It sure is, Mia. Did you put the stickers on yourself?" He squatted down by the chair, poking at the stickers that were starting to fall off due to their faded adhesive.

"I did! My chart had too many gold stars, so I got to put the old ones on my chair," She stated matter-of-factly, a proud nod shaking about her hair.

"It looks very good," Osomatsu reached up and poked the tip of her nose, making her laugh, "I'm going to get that name tag you made me, okay?

Daddy'll be right back."

"Okay!" Another of her wide smiles sent him on his way, watching his step as the children started to get into their chairs while the parents sat or knelt right next to them. Carefully making his way over to the clearly marked teacher's desk, he looked to see that he was the last one to grab his name tag. The name definitely wasn't written by Mia, but he recognized the stickers that he'd given her for Christmas last year. The laminate would ensure that they would stay on.

"Good morning," A friendly voice turned his attention to one of the teachers walking up to the desk, a clipboard tucked underneath her arm. Her name tag read as 'Ms. (L/n)'.

"Ah, good morning. Sorry for almost being late, I had a bit of a rough night," He laughed a little, an itch forming in the back of his brain about her last name.

"It's all right, no need to worry," She laughed back, but he couldn't tell if it was because she wanted to be polite, or if she had a few of those nights as well. Being a teacher, it was probably both, "Since you're the last one...that makes you Mr. Matsuno the sixth."

"Yep, the eldest of the sextuplet fathers here," He turned to see each of his brothers settling down with their own kids, some next to others while a few were at a table by themselves. Himself and Mia were one of those few, "I'm not in charge of them, but I'll try to keep them in line."

A smug look briefly crossed her face before the smile became genuine.

"Just like back in high school?"

Osomatsu paused, staring right at Ms. (L/n) until she raised her right eyebrow, the one bearing a scar that split it diagonally in half. The memories came flooding back from a distant past while he was in Japan: second year of high school, the foreign exchange student that was there because her parents were businesspeople, and the bond they grew as friends before she had to move back to America after graduating high school.

"(Y/n)...?" He loudly whispered, mostly in shock and surprise.

"Hi," Her smile spread wider as recognition filled his face.

"Oh, my...it's so good to see you! How have you been?" He reached out and grabbed her right hand, clasping it in his grip as if she was drowning.

"I've been all right, but we can catch up later. I have a classroom of kids to teach," She waved the clipboard a little, "and a class full of parents that want to see how well I teach their kids."

"Right, sorry," He immediately let go and took the name tag, pinning it to his shirt before sitting next to Mia.

"Good morning, class!" (Y/n) called out in a sing-song voice, holding none of the teasing tone that Osomatsu just heard her talk in.

"Good morning, Ms. (L/n)!" The children replied, some laughing and others in a normal tone.

"Today is a special day for our school, as well as schools across America. We get to show your parents what happens nearly every day in this classroom!"

You really didn't know?

Osomatsu heard Todomatsu call out to him mentally.

No clue at all. It wasn't at the forefront of my mind, since America is a pretty big place.

Osomatsu slightly shook his head as his eyes glanced at the youngest brother, meeting his teasing gaze.

Our dear oldest brother wouldn't think to look back at our past during high school to imagine that (Y--

Shut it, Shittymatsu!

Ichimatsu yelled out mentally, bringing their attention back to the teacher.

"Ready!" The kids called out again, holding up a colored marker while the other teacher was handing out inked papers with different designs on them. The sheet that settled in front of Mia was a plain circle, and the other kids got various shapes with no detail at all. Osomatsu quickly glanced around the desk they were at, seeing the kids draw the details in, immediately picking up what the teachers wanted.

"What are you going to draw, Mia?" He watched her grab a few more colors from the marker tray in the middle of the table, sitting patiently as Mia uncapped the black one.

"I don't know," She smiled as she started drawing circles, nine circles within the thick black outline with eleven more all along the outside. He raised an eyebrow as she drew smiling faces on all of them before grabbing the red marker while putting the black marker back. She roughly colored around one of the faces on the outside and one face on the inside, putting the red marker back before grabbing the blue marker. Osomatsu propped his head up with his arm on the desk as she began to draw in the Matsuno family in its entirety.

"That looks like our family."

"Because it is!" Mia stuck her tongue out at him, with him playfully returning the gesture before giving a wide smile, "That's you and me, Uncle K and Auntie Becky with Hayden, Uncle Cho and Aunt Kate with Jade and Kai, Uncle E and Auntie Erika with Damien, Auntie Reese and Uncle Geyu and Jaiden, Samara, and Lilah, and last is Uncle Tot and Aunt Maddy with Trevor!"

Mia had pointed at each face as she said the names, making him smile as she tried to pronounce the first syllable of their Japanese names. He didn't care if she never got it right. She colored it in a little bit more before getting up and handing the piece of paper to (y/n), with the teacher kneeling down to look at Mia's eye level. Standing back up, (y/n) moved towards a wall decorated with all of the names of the kids in class, pinning the artwork underneath Mia's name.

"Those are some interesting names," Osomatsu heard one of the parents at the table comment, "Did you immigrate to America?"

"Yeah, my family moved here from Japan a little while ago," He responded, watching Mia carefully as she came back over to her seat.

"Oh, that's interesting. Your daughter doesn't

look

Japanese."

Osomatsu tensed, locking his face into a smile as he felt five other pairs of eyes glare towards his table. When Mia settled into her seat, she returned the smile she thought was for her.

"I know, right?" He finally looked at the mother, dragging Mia close and squishing her cheek against his, "She's so adorable! Look at these pudgy little cheeks!"

The mother laughed a little before looking towards her own kid, paying full attention to him as Osomatsu cupped Mia's cheeks in his hands, rubbing them around while making Mia laugh. Another piece of paper was placed in front of Mia, and she spent the remaining time drawing more random shapes within the square.

"All right, markers down!" (Y/n) called out, "Ms. Johnson, could you please collect the marker trays from the desks?"

The day picked up speed as time went on, from (y/n) reading through a story while everyone sat on the mat to after recess when the teachers pulled out yoga mats for the kids to lay down on. The nap was scheduled for forty-five minutes and (y/n) had directed the parents out of the classroom so the kids could get some rest without distractions. She escorted them back to the school lunchroom for a miniature parent-teacher conference.

Osomatsu grabbed a seat and his brothers gathered around him, talking amongst themselves and catching up, commenting on how the kids were doing at home. No one mentioned Ichimatsu's ex-wife.

"Thank you all for being here," (Y/n) cut into the quiet conversations, "I wanted to take this time to address any concerns that you have with either how I teach, or with the class itself. The curriculum was sent home with your child at the beginning of the school year and it hasn't changed. I still wanted to address any concerns, though."

The mother from before raised her hand for a moment before speaking, "I was concerned with the activities that we went through today. They did not seem to hold much knowledge or information in regards to education."

"They were motor skill lessons, designed to teach the children to have finer control of their fingers, hands, and arms," (Y/n) replied smoothly, "The lessons were not directly tied with mental education, but are still important nonetheless."

A murmur went through the parents as some commented on how that made sense. There were still lessons about mathematics and the social sciences throughout the day, but they wouldn't be as intensive or focused as grade school.

"What kinds of questions do you suggest that I ask my son on a daily basis about your class?" Another father raised his hand.

"My class is focused on developing emotional control and an all-around basic understanding of themselves, both physically and mentally. The more they learn about these things, the better off their start will be in grade school," (Y/n) nodded with confidence, "It's best to ask your child about what they've learned and have them show it to you, regardless if it's a sheet of paper or an physical exercise. Repetition has only shown a positive impact on a child when they're learning motor skills."

Osomatsu leaned against the table, soaking in the questions and answers that were being talked about. Despite this only lasting for one school year,

Mia had shown progress with whatever she brought home, only having good things to say about her teachers.

"She's really grown up, hasn't she?" He felt Ichimatsu nudge his shoulder a little.

It took him a few seconds to realize that he was talking about (y/n), not Mia.

"Yeah, she has," Osomatsu was honest, "I don't really remember much about what her goals were besides wanting to help kids out."

"There aren't a lot of better positions than being a teacher if you want to help kids," Karamatsu sighed.

"There's no ring," Todomatsu teased, lightly jabbing Ichimatsu and Osomatsu in their sides, "If she's this successful of a teacher, then she'd probably make a good mom."

Ichimatsu turned away, a soft growl emitting from his throat as Osomatsu laughed a little.

"No way," He rubbed the back of his head, "If these were different circumstances and I'd kept in contact with (y/n)...then maybe. But no, just because she's single doesn't mean she's looking to be with anyone."

His younger brothers stared at him in shock before looking towards (y/n) with a small smile on their faces. They seemed to silently agree.

As the school day drew to a close, each parent was handed a packet of papers describing what the school was attempting to do with their child's education, while the children were given their drawings back to take home. Fully rested from their nap, the kids left the classroom with their parents as the classroom slowly emptied. Osomatsu gathered Mia's things and slung the tiny backpack over his shoulder as he reached for her hand.

"Osomatsu."

He turned to see (y/n) standing with the remains of the last craft of the day in her arms, a smile on her face.

"It was good to see you again."

"Thank you," He turned to face her fully, "I'll admit that I didn't realize you were teaching this class, but I know that Mia will be fully taken care of while she's here."

He gave a low bow, his body making a nearly perfect ninety degree angle as Mia leaned down to look at his face, confused as to what he was doing. He heard some shuffling papers before a rustle of cloth, glancing up to see her return the gesture, almost as low as he was.

"Thank you for giving me the honor of helping Mia Matsuno learn."

They stood up at the same time, both holding wide smiles on their faces. The second teacher looked between them for a moment, confusion in her face before turning back to her duties.

"I look forward to the parent-teacher conference, to hear how Mia has been throughout the year," He picked up Mia, saddling her against his waist while wrapping a supportive arm underneath her. She immediately leaned against him, tucking her head against his shoulder and grabbing the front of his shirt for stability. Osomatsu held out his free hand to (y/n).

"I look forward to that, as well. Just don't give her too many bad examples to follow," (Y/n) grasped her hand in his own, slipping something between their hands and shaking his before pulling away.

He looked at his open hand to see her business card, her professional information printed out on the front while a pen had scratched something onto the back.

'Call me next time you want to drink'

Osomatsu scoffed and tucked it into his back pocket quickly, closing the classroom door behind him as he left the classroom in a hurry.

"Daddy, you're blushing," Mia reached up and poked his cheek hard.

"Yeah...I guess I am."

18!Brothers and 17!Sister!Reader

(This was partially inspired by a 'what if' thought in my head while watching the Osomatsu-san movie again.)

When I started attending high school with my brothers, I thought about all of the typical cliches that could happen. Since I was a year younger than them and they were clearly more popular than me (after all, sextuplets were rare), I braced for the girls in their year and mine to flock to me, grasping for the small opportunity that I presented to get into a relationship with them.

After all, if you start hanging out with your crush's sibling, then it's an easy win...right?

It happened a few times as some of their classmates asked me about why they act in unison so often, but I slowly noticed a rift start to pull my brothers' closeness apart. During the first few months of my first year, they had started to shut down and branch away from each other, both at home and school.

Things that we used to do together as siblings crumbled away, leaving me with more free time than I ever wanted -- so I focused on my studies. If my older brothers wanted to spend their last year in high school finding themselves, then I'd aim for something that wouldn't get in their way.

I never really knew how

bad

the rift had gotten until a few days before their graduation.

"(Y/n)?"

"Come in," I pulled the headphones off of my ears, settling it around my neck as the video game soundtrack continued playing. Partially turning my

head, I watched as the guest knelt on the ground facing away from me to close the sliding door behind them. I knew who it was by the curve of their back, "Todomatsu...you should be asleep."

"I can't..." His voice had shifted into a higher pitch over the last year, sounding almost childlike while his demeanor had transformed with it. The youngest of my sextuplet brothers crawled over to me on all fours, only stopping when he was right next to me. The floor desk I used allowed him to lay down and rest his head against my left upper leg, his hands curling up and gripping the bottom of my shirt tightly like a toddler frightened of the dark.

"...I'm almost finished with studying. Be patient for a little bit longer, okay? Then I'll listen to you," I focused back on the science homework before setting my mechanical pencil down and turned off the CD player, pulling the headphones from my neck and resting it on the desk.

The digital clock readout showed '01:03' and -- if Todomatsu's issue wasn't small -- I was going to be up for at least another hour.

"What can I do for my eighteen-year-old brother?"

"I want to hear you sing again," He glanced up at me, his eyes wide with either anticipation or apprehension.

"Todo...I can't sing right now. It's late enough where I'd wake everyone up," I motioned towards the clock. His eyes welled with tears as the corners of his mouth pulled down into an exaggerated frown. If I didn't comply in the next few seconds, the crocodile tears would start and he'd cause a louder uproar than my singing.

"Okay, okay...!" I tilted my head away from his view, a pained look crossing my face. This had become a weekly habit of his and Todomatsu always knew how to get his way.

As I took in a breath to start singing a lullaby, my door slammed open and startled both of us as our oldest brother glared down at the youngest

sextuplet. His hair was roughed up like he had been sleeping and the dark circles around his eyes told us that we had woken him up.

"Big brother Osomatsu..." Todomatsu and I whimpered out, unsure which one of us had pissed him off.

"Stop bothering (y/n) and go back to sleep," I could feel Todomatsu flinch on my leg, his hands slowly releasing my shirt before standing up and trudging out of my room. Osomatsu watched him until I heard another door close from across the hallway, his eyes locking onto my own for the first time in a while, "He's not a baby, so stop treating him like one."

"It's not like I tell him to come to my room," I shifted in my seat so I could properly look at my pajama-clad brother, "He does it on his own."

"You think I'm supposed to be his keeper?"

"I never said that, Osomatsu," Shifting my posture more so I could sit more comfortably, I looked back up at him, "Why can't you just be like you guys were in middle school? Hell, I'd even take a year ago before I started high school. The way you all act now...it's weird..."

"What was weird was us acting like that," Osomatsu's reply was sharp, his eyes partially narrowing towards me, "Six guys acting like that? Fucking creepy as hell."

"I didn't find it creepy."

"Well, aren't you special?" He took a few steps into the room with a sarcastic roll of his eyes, "You don't know what it's like to be called over and over and not understand which Matsuno is being called for. To have someone call you the wrong name again and again, or to compare your brothers to your own actions..."

Osomatsu hadn't stopped advancing until his hands were gripping my shoulders tightly, kneeling in front of me with a look of aggression that wasn't aimed at me. I just happened to be the person he vented to.

"Big brother Osomatsu..." I felt my face shift into a saddened expression.

"Stop it," The sudden coldness in his voice shocked me as the anger in his eyes quickly turned into daggers, "Don't look at me like that."

"But-"

"I get enough pitiful looks at school. I don't want any from you," He stood back up by shoving my shoulders, moving back towards the door, "In fact, I don't want to see your face at graduation. I'm already going to see five others that piss me off."

The door shut behind him in finality, leaving me in stunned silence as I slowly reached my hands up to my face.

What had I done to piss him off this much?

I slowly turned to look into the small makeup mirror that Mom had gifted me, seeing the face that had drawn so much ire from my big brother -- my dark eyes were similar to his, sharing the same cheek structure with a slimmer jawline. The ears were in the same place and the hair color was the same. Tears bubbled up in my eyes before streaming down my cheeks, Osomatsu's words harshly ringing in my ears.

Graduation day arrived faster than I anticipated, whoops and hollers heard from the courtyard as students arrived on the distant campus. I was the last to leave our home, trudging along the main road with my face aimed towards the ground as the morning sun greeted me over the buildings. If I was honest, I was ashamed of my behavior over the last few days.

After the harsh words Osomatsu spoke, I dug even deeper into my studies and started locking my door so no one would be able to enter until morning. My brothers were barely home anymore, staying out until past sundown and then not talking when they encountered each other in the halls.

I made sure to stay out of Osomatsu's line of sight.

"(Y/n)!" I heard my name called out from somewhere ahead of me. Glancing up, I saw my second oldest brother waiting on a street corner, his mouth lifting into a smile as he waved a hand above his head.

"Karamatsu, you're going to be late," I fully lifted my head, rubbing the back of my hand against my cheeks to wipe away any stray tears, "You didn't need to wait for me."

"I wanted to walk with you since it's the last time I can do that as a student," He fell in line with me, walking between me and the street, "I haven't seen you at home often the past few days and I wanted to make sure that everything's going well with you."

"Oh," I looked back towards the sidewalk again, "I've been at home, just sequestered in my room. Gotta study for the finals after all."

"Are you still planning on heading to Tokyo Uni?"

"I'm not sure. If my application is accepted, then yeah."

"I'm sure you'll do great wherever you decide to go," Karamatsu slightly bumped his shoulder into mine, a small laugh sounding from his mouth.

"Karamatsu...are you sick of seeing my face?" I stopped walking, my grip tight on the school bag resting over my shoulder.

"What?" I heard his shoes stop on the pavement, the sound of his voice coming closer, "Where did that question come from?"

"From big brother Osomatsu. He said that he didn't want to see me at graduation today," I couldn't hold back the tears as I looked up to Karamatsu, "What was it that I did wrong? Did I forget something, or use something of his without knowing?"

"(Y/n), no...!" Karamatsu looked shocked before quickly closing the distance between us, grabbing me in a tight hug before resting a hand on my head, "Not at all, (y/n), so don't think that. He was just...frustrated with a few things going on, so don't take what he says personally."

His hand shifted from my head to my hand, slowly leading me towards school as I gathered myself together again, wiping the tears with my uniform jacket sleeve. Before he turned the final corner to school, Karamatsu released my hand and looked back towards me as we walked.

"I've got something to talk to our brothers about after school so don't wait up on us, okay?"

I recognized the look he gave me, seeing the hidden warning of 'don't come looking for us' as plain as day. Glancing downwards, I only nodded before he gave a smile and ran off through the school gate, leaving me to head alone to my homeroom.

The call for the graduation ceremony was finally given to the second years, each of my classmates filing out through the door and down to the gymnasium. I wormed my way to the back of the line when I realized that I'd be sitting a few rows behind Ichimatsu's and Osomatsu's homeroom section, hearing the light snickering of some of my classmates and whispers of the Matsuno sibling weirdos. I could handle the rumors of high schoolers, but not the glare that I could receive at any moment from my brothers.

With the second years seated, the announcement for the third years' procession was made and everyone turned to watch the graduates walk in, each homeroom led by their teachers. I mostly hid behind the student next to me, watching my brothers file in with their respective homerooms and take their seats in the empty sections. After the national anthem and school anthem, the principal stood up for a speech that didn't last very long before he called for the homeroom teachers to call out their graduating students.

After each name in a homeroom was called and the respective student stood up, a representative of that homeroom went to the stage and collected the certificates, giving each adult on stage a bow of respect. When that student returned to their homeroom, they called out for them to sit and let the next homeroom teacher start the process all over again.

The graduating students were all seated again before the long speeches began, talking about how the future of a wonderful and proud nation sits

upon their shoulders, how they'll achieve great things and bring honor to those that know them. I could see some of my brothers start to nod off during the speech.

Closing ceremonies started with a farewell song while the graduating students stood, ending with them saying farewell to their teachers before being led out of the gym. The second years stood up after them, proceeding out to our classrooms. The school day continued as normal until homeroom was let out, the halls erupting with cheers and cries of 'congratulations'.

Karamatsu's words echoed in my head, my eyes lowering towards my desk as I sat in the classroom, my classmates either leaving to celebrate with their clubs and older friends or spend the rest of the time hanging out with others. Slowly packing my school bag up, I made my way towards the shoe lockers.

"Hey," I heard Osomatsu's voice up ahead, snapping my vision towards where I heard him talk. I saw him jab a thumb towards the staircase behind him, hearing a tongue click that could've only come from Jyushimatsu. Darting into the aisle with my assigned locker, I pulled my outdoor shoes and swapped them for the inside slippers.

"Hey, little (y/n)."

I gave a tired glance behind me, seeing one of Todomatsu's and Choromatsu's classmates standing on the wooden platform with a small envelope in her hand, "Did you want me to give that to him?"

"If you could. It's just so hard for me to get close to him when he's clinging to Choromatsu," A blush crossed her face, "Hey, you don't think that they're...you know--"

I took the letter, putting it into the bag without a second glance, "No, that's fucking gross. I'll give him the letter, but that's it."

"(Y/n), could you give Karamatsu my letter?"

"And mine to Jyushimatsu?"

Suddenly, a small crowd of older girls gathered around me, fighting to give me their last ditch love letters. I took all of them and slipped through the crowd, walking through the myriad of people that were celebrating in the courtyard and front area.

The walk home was silent with only the sound of my heeled shoes hitting the concrete, a sigh escaping my lips as I looked down towards my partially stuffed bag. At least one of the slice-of-life cliches came true during my school career, being used as a messenger for someone crushing on my siblings. I didn't know if I should respond in the cliche way, opening their letters and reading the sickening confessions of puppy love that would probably never survive past the first year of university, or if I should just throw them out.

Removing my shoes in the entryway, I called out that I was home before trudging up the stairs into my bedroom, sitting down the bag and rifling through the letters. Organizing them into six piles on my desk, I sat in front of them and stared. Each brother had a letter or two, with some of them thicker than the others. I could only guess that there was something stuffed into those, but I had no clue what to do with them.

Stripping the uniform off and hanging it up, I donned some loose sweatpants and a hand-me-down shirt from my brothers, glancing back towards the letters and gathering them up. Slipping into my brothers' larger room, I set the letters down in their respective piles on the corner desk before looking towards the two pictures that were taped to the wooden support beam to the right of the desk.

A soft smile crossed my lips as I saw a younger version of my six brothers, all huddled around a kotatsu with a Christmas cake on the table in front of them. The photo underneath that one was their first day of middle school, dressed in the uniform and doing the same pose.

The memory of Osomatsu's angered face surfaced in my mind, the smile on my lips disappearing quickly as I left the room. Somehow in one year, they'd turned from goofball brothers to young men that I couldn't really recognize as relatives. Maybe I'd find the strength to ask them when they came back home today.

"(Y/n), dinner's ready...!" Mom called from the dining room, pulling my attention from the book I was reading. Passing through the common room to see my brothers' food all covered in saran wrap, I took a seat next to Dad and thanked Mom for making the food.

"It was such a nice ceremony today," Dad started the conversation, taking a bite of the hamburg steak, "I can't wait to do that again next year."

I laughed a little as I felt his elbow jab into my side playfully, "I think it'll be more painful next year, since I'll more than likely be moving to live on a university campus."

"Oh, don't start that talk," Mom chided with a smile, "I can only handle so much emotional drama in one day."

"We'll be well taken care of, that's for sure. Six boys going off to find jobs while our daughter goes to become one of the elite in the nation!"

"Dad--" I chewed on the hamburg steak before continuing, "It's not

that

impressive...Lots of people go to college."

"Yeah, but they're not my kids!" A laugh tore through his throat, "In a month, you'll be in your third year and finally out of your brothers' shadow. I know it's been hard the last year or two, but I know that you'll keep swinging away."

"It hasn't been

that

bad," I set my fork down after finishing my food, "Everyone seems to be going through changes around this stage in life, so I'm not worried about it."

Mom and Dad seemed to silently agree before we heard the front door open and several shoes get kicked off.

"Welcome back! Food's on the table for you," Mom called out as she cleared our places, letting me excuse myself to see Osomatsu and Jyushimatsu sit down heavily at the common room table and tear off the wrapping on the food. Their faces were bruised, bearing a few scratches and Jyushimatsu's left eye was starting to swell.

"What happened to you...?" My eyes went wide with shock, looking towards the entryway to see Ichimatsu glare towards me before turning towards the stairway upstairs as Karamatsu closed the sliding door behind him, "...guys?"

"None of your business," Osomatsu's voice cut into the question, drawing my attention back to him.

"Your health

is

part of my business, big brother," I clenched a fist, "I did everything I could to stay out of your way since you told me you didn't want to see my face, so the least that you could do was tell me what happened that messed up yours."

"I don't need you yelling at me when you don't know anything about what happened," Osomatsu set his chopsticks down, shifting his focus from the food to me.

"If it was a brothers' spat, then tell me that's all it was," I returned his glare with my own, "But don't ever tell me that my family is not my business."

"Shut the hell up, (y/n)," Ichimatsu's voice warned from the doorway, the fourth oldest sauntering in and sitting at his usual place. His face was just as bruised as the other two, "It's obvious that we don't want to talk about it, so leave us alone."

I backed away as my other brothers slowly came into the room, all of them fixated on the food and not even looking at me.

"What the hell is wrong with you guys?

What have I ever done to you?!

" I shouted before rushing out of the common room, storming up the stairs and slamming my door closed as loud as I could. Falling onto my folded futon, I cried into the padding with abandon, my tears feeling hot against my skin.

My sextuplet brothers had changed so much from when we were in middle school, when we were able to talk to each other freely without throwing barbed comments at each other.

I don't know what had happened during their second year of high school, but it clearly changed them to where they all had turned their backs on one another. It was as if they hated being around each other, around the same face their entire life...and their ire had just spread to me. I had no way to know what they were thinking, especially since they stopped talking about stuff like that. They loved being a part of something that no one else had, something that made them unique.

I doggedly dove deeper into my studies throughout my third year, working hard while living solely inside my room. I only saw my brothers in passing as I came home from school on the way to my bedroom.

I was hurt by what they did.

Much more hurt than I realized.

I wrote out practice thesis papers and longhand problems until my fingers ached, studied university-level books until a migraine developed, jokingly called the library my second home to my parents. I earned a scholarship to Tokyo University, was graduating in the top ten percent of my class, and was chosen to represent my homeroom at the graduation ceremony.

"Do you have some time to talk, bookworm?"

I clicked my tongue in annoyance, completely forgetting to lock my bedroom door earlier. I pulled my headphones from my ears, giving a partial glower to the person speaking from the doorway. He had started to wear a specific color more often, as had the others.

"Don't call me that, Ichimatsu."

"Why not? I think it's a good nickname for the smartest person in the family," Ichimatsu closed the door behind him and sat down near my folded futon, sliding his hands into the sweatshirt front pocket.

"Did you come to talk about my name or something else?" I quipped, moving to face him as I kept the mechanical pencil in my hand. I fought against my habit of tapping the eraser against the desk, narrowing my eyes with a mixture of suspicion and frustration.

"Something else, actually," His face appeared to be lost in thought before focusing on me again, "It's about you."

"And?"

"I wanted to apologize for missing your birthday this year...and last year," He crossed his legs, becoming more comfortable in his sitting position.

"It's not like that hasn't happened before," I gave him an expressionless stare, "Your birthday has always overshadowed mine, so what makes the last two any different?"

"Okay, this isn't going how I expected..." His right hand pulled out of the pocket, reaching up and scratching his right cheek with an index finger.

"Do you...not remember what your last words to me were?"

A look passed over Ichimatsu's face so quickly that I wouldn't have caught it if I wasn't looking: remorse and regret followed by uncertainty.

He definitely remembered.

"How do I say this without starting a war...?"

"Osomatsu wanted me out of his way, so I did everything I could to keep myself from his sight," I reminded him, "It's not a war when one side has completely surrendered before the official declaration. You guys told me to back off; I did."

I started to turn back towards the book on my desk before I felt a strong grip on my left shoulder, pulling me back to face Ichimatsu again as displeasure settled into my expression.

"I didn't mean for you to completely seal yourself away in here!" His other hand gripped my free shoulder, keeping me from turning away from him, "What I said was dumb and in the heat of the moment, okay?"

"I tried to give you guys the chance to talk to me about it, but I was met with a figurative slap in the face," My eyes narrowed to a glare, "I'm your sister, so I know what a fight between brothers looks like...and what I saw that night was the end result of something worse. I dipped my finger into the situation and got bit," I shoved his hands off of me while moving back a little, "Don't try to apologize about it...like I said, I got the message."

"(Y/n), stop and listen!" Ichimatsu held onto the front of my shirt tightly, shoving me to the ground underneath him as I tried to fight him off. He was a lot stronger than I remembered, thinking back to the rough-housing we used to do when we were younger. His legs pinned mine together as he straddled my upper thighs, most of his weight balanced through his hands holding the collar of my shirt to the floor.

I was left panting in exhaustion after I punched, shoved, and kicked at him multiple times, my face red with exertion as his face bore a new scratch from one of my nails.

"Just...listen to me, okay?" Ichimatsu's tone begged, his eyes never faltering from mine.

"You have my attention..." I took a shaky breath in.

"I fucked up and I know the others did, too. There isn't an easy way to go about this...so, I'm sorry."

I stilled as a tear hit my cheek, Ichimatsu's face twisting up with remorse as another tear fell.

"I'm sorry about what I said, I'm sorry about how I acted towards you, I'm sorry that we were so focused on our own problems that we were ignorant of how it affected everyone else," The tears fell faster before Ichimatsu released his hold on my shirt to fully lay on me, his hands tucking underneath my shoulders in an attempted hug, "I'm the worst person alive..."

His soft cries struck a chord in my chest, my hands reaching around his chest and returning the hug while I buried my face into the hood of his sweatshirt, smothering my own tears as I felt a large weight fall off my shoulders. Relief surged through my system as we lay crying on one another, an emotional mess of a brother and sister as our sobs fueled each other.

"If I didn't know what was going on, I'd be calling the cops."

I pulled away from the comfort of the hood to see two others standing just inside my door, almost cramping up the space in my tiny room. Ichimatsu sniffed as he pulled away, quickly climbing off of me and moving towards a corner as the other two knelt down in front of me as I sat up, rubbing my eyes.

The wide smile I was used to could be clearly seen on Jyushimatsu's face, part of it hidden by the long sleeve of his yellow hoodie. A coy smirk settled on Osomatsu's lips as he got comfortable in front of me, the red color of his shirt standing out in the monochrome scheme of my room.

"Oh, shut up--" I looked towards Osomatsu, whom I knew was the one that spoke earlier.

"I'm sorry, too," Jyushimatsu rested a hand on my head, his fingers working through the fabric of his sleeve to muss up my hair, "I tried to be tough, but I got too carried away."

"Jyushimatsu, I don't think I could stay mad at you for too long," I reached out and lightly pushed a finger into his left cheek, causing him to close his eyes as his hands smooshed my cheeks together.

"What about me?" Osomatsu grinned as he pointed to himself, drawing my attention as Jyushimatsu continued to press my cheeks, "Could you stay mad at me for long?"

"That depends on your apology, big brother," I dropped the smile instantly, remembering how he had yelled at me.

"Ah..." He dropped his hand before leaning back, letting his head tilt backwards and stared up at the ceiling. Osomatsu held the pose for a little while longer as Jyushimatsu freed my face from his hands, moving over to Ichimatsu and dragging him from the room.

"You have the privacy you asked them for, so say whatever you need to," I adjusted my posture, pulling my headphones from around my neck and laying them on the desk behind me. Osomatsu groaned a little as he pulled himself up into a sitting position again, a thoughtful look crossing his face before he spoke.

"How much do you remember from the last three years...?"

I narrowed my eyes a little more.

"I'm going to take that as 'all of it'," Osomatsu gave a nervous smirk before settling into a serious expression, "I'm sorry, (y/n). I think I'm the one that started this whole mess and I let it stray too far when I should've curbed it. The things that I told you were awful, so I want to know how to make it right."

The offer sat heavily in the air between us, Osomatsu's expression remaining unchanged as I brought a hand up to my chin to think about my options.

What could make up for three years of tiptoeing around the brothers, getting yelled at for what I felt were simple questions and practically

shoved into a corner?

"Make my graduation a day that I won't forget," I lowered my gaze back to him, seeing surprise flash across his face before a mischievous smirk covered his lips.

"I can't persuade you to stay at home after high school, can I?"

"I'm not going to be a NEET like you guys. I've made too much progress while outcast from your circle, so there's no way in hell that I'm throwing it all out the window," I stuck out a tongue towards my oldest brother, seeing the smirk widen.

"Damn, well...the least I can do is obey your command, little sis," Osomatsu closed his eyes happily as he rubbed an index finger underneath his nose.

Prince!Osomatsu/Prince!Karamatsu and Princess!Timid!Reader

Inspired by shimmering_clouds's prompt.

"I knew I'd find you here."

A young boy looked over his shoulder to see his older twin leaning against the small door frame, a coy smirk resting on his lips. Dark hair was tossed about on his head, proof that he had been running around previously in the day, and his dark eyes always held a spark of energy no matter what was being talked about.

Giving a small sigh, the younger twin shifted his own dark eyes back towards the garden that spread out from underneath the window like a large fancy carpet, the gardeners tending to it as they always did.

"Get yelled at by your swordsmanship tutor again?"

"Bug off, Osomatsu," The young boy snapped, the corner of his lip curling back into a snarl, "Just because you're amazing at that kind of stuff doesn't mean that I'm able to do it."

The older twin laughed a little before sitting opposite the younger, looking out the same window and enjoying the same view, "Mayhaps, but you've always been better at book studies than me, Karamatsu. When I become king, I'll leave the diplomatic stuff to you while I keep our kingdom safe."

"Yeah, right," Karamatsu scoffed, the snarl disappearing quickly as he spoke, "You'd just keep charging into war while I have to clean up your messes."

"Hey, I'm not that violent!"

"Say that to the scar on your face."

Osomatsu's lips shifted into a pout, a hand raising up to the thin white line that was carved from his left forehead to the middle of his chin. The gash had healed a long time ago, but the light scar it left behind was still visible to those that looked too closely.

"The man deserved what he did to me," The older twin stuck out his tongue to no one in particular, "He tried to swindle me with some cheap trinket and attacked when I called his scam. It's not my fault."

"You made our parents worry sick about you," Karamatsu leaned back against the stonework, relaxing his shoulders as he watched the gardeners continue their meticulous work, "Serves you right for going out with just one--who's that?"

Both young men leaned forward towards the small window, their combined attention grabbed by the same figure walking through the garden. Her attire was clearly more regal than the hired help's blacks and browns, showing off the royal blue dye that her dress was stained with. Compared to the other working adults around her, she was smaller which meant that she was probably around their age.

"Ugh...not another one," They both groaned at the same time, pulling back from the window with grimaces on their faces.

The king and queen had started entertaining other nearby noble families in efforts to spread their territory and to wed off the twin sons to strengthen their influence. While the twin princes were young enough to be married, neither of them had agreed on the proposed girls. They knew that time was growing short for them before a marriage was arranged without their input.

"How many is that this month?" Karamatsu rubbed a hand against the back of his neck, looking towards his twin brother.

"The fifth one," Osomatsu lowered his head before standing up, switching his gaze from the young girl to his brother, "Come on...let's get this over with."

Climbing down their small hideaway room, the princes corrected their partially disheveled appearances before heading out into the garden, ignoring the servants that greeted and bowed to them. The young noblewoman had made her way towards the back of the garden, ducking into a small hedge maze with a fountain at the center. Karamatsu looked towards Osomatsu and nodded, both of them heading into the maze and maneuvering their way around towards the center easily.

They soon saw the young girl standing in front of a dead end, placing a hand against the green wall.

"Lost?" They called out at the same time, smirking to themselves when the female quickly turned towards them, her eyes wide as she took a step back before curtsying deeply.

"...ah, Your Royal Highnesses--!"

'She dresses the part, but definitely doesn't act like the others,'

Karamatsu glanced over to Osomatsu, watching the older twin's lips twist up into a spiteful sneer.

'She'll act just like the others. Just wait and see...'

"I've never seen you here before," Osomatsu spoke out loud, his tone sharp and commanding. Karamatsu held back from rolling his eyes as Osomatsu continued, "What are you doing here?"

The young girl kept her head down as she held the curtsy, "...I was just admiring the work that was put into this place..."

"Stand up," The elder's voice ordered, her body instantly reacting to his command, "What's your name?"

"Ah...I am Duchess (Y/n) (L/n)...daughter of the Grand Duchess of Birchwell, your Highnesses," The young girl tried to speak in a steady tone but Karamatsu noticed the slight trembling in her shoulders, quickly intervening before Osomatsu could frighten her more.

"It's a pleasure to meet your acquaintance, your Grace," Karamatsu tucked an arm against his waist before giving a short bow, sending a scalding glare towards Osomatsu as he moved, "Are you here visiting for a short while?"

"I...don't know..." (Y/n)'s arms tucked in tightly to her chest as she glanced around the area, possibly looking for a route of escape, "I...just wanted to see the garden..."

"Of course you would!" Osomatsu laughed, taking a step closer to her before taking her elbow and walking with her towards the entrance of the hedge maze, "We have the best-looking flowers in the land!"

'What are you doing?!'

Karamatsu paled a little before falling in line behind the two, his eyes watching (y/n) as she tried to shirk away from Osomatsu's touch despite the older's grip remaining firm.

'Getting her out of here,'

Osomatsu sent a smirk towards his younger twin, '

It's clear that she doesn't want to actually be here, so why not formally kick her out?'

'You're scaring her!'

'So?'

"No, wait--!" (Y/n) shakily tried to pry off Osomatsu's fingers from her arms, the three of them stopping when they heard an exclamation of joy echo out from the grand door leading to the garden.

"Duchess (Y/n),

there you are

!" An older woman wearing an extravagant red gown that nearly doubled her size paraded out with a small entourage of servants, "I've been looking

everywhere

for you! It's time to present yourself to the King and Queen!"

"M-mother, I--"

"Do

not

call me that here!" The joyfulness completely dropped away from the woman's voice, taking on a strict command similar to what Osomatsu sounded like. The twin princes froze, glancing at each other before looking towards (y/n), "Now, spare the princes your troublemaking and come meet your future in-laws."

Osomatsu's hand shifted from a hasty grip to a more secure one, drawing (y/n) a little closer to him as Karamatsu stepped next to her on the other side, "We were actually showing her around. I'm sure Mom and Dad won't mind that."

"Your Royal Highnesses, please--"

"Come on, (y/n)," Karamatsu gently took (y/n) by the hand and briskly walked towards one of the side entrances to the garden, Osomatsu trailing a little behind to cast a glare from over his shoulder at the woman.

The two young boys quickly made their way through the castle, ducking through doorways and dragging (y/n) behind them as they went, finally stopping when they came to their little hideaway room. Dropping their hold on the little duchess, the twins sat down heavily on their respective seats and caught their breath.

"What got into that old bat?" Osomatsu laughed a little, "It's not like we were going to eat you or something."

"Oh, what did we do?" Karamatsu places his head between his hands, "Mom and Dad are gonna kill us for dragging her away."

"So?" The oldest gave a wide smile, "They can't kill us...we're the princes that need to carry this kingdom on our backs!"

"...what am I going to do now...?" (Y/n) softly spoke up, still standing by the doorway with her face flushed red from exertion, "I disobeyed my mom--!"

"It's not that big of a deal, Duchess (Y/n)," Karamatsu lowered his hands, "The most trouble you're going to get into is a mild swat of the hand.

We're

the ones that dragged you away."

"You did it first," Osomatsu pointed a finger towards Karamatsu, "I just followed your lead."

"Don't put this on me!" The younger stood up, the older quickly mimicking his action as they pressed their foreheads together, their lips pulled back into a snarl.

"Please, don't fight!" (Y/n) cried out, running towards the two of them and lightly touching their closest shoulders, "I'm sure that it'll be okay if we...go down and explain..."

Her voice quickly lost confidence as both brothers looked towards her, their faces dropping all hostility. She glanced towards the side, taking a few steps back to give them space as she partially turned away.

"Why are you so scared of stuff, (y/n)?" Osomatsu rested a hand on his hip, the previous anger forgotten by the sudden turn of personality in the young duchess, "It's not like my brother and I have actually harmed each other."

"...I just...don't like fighting."

"Fighting in general, or just people getting mad?" Karamatsu sat back down, his elbows resting on his knees while leaning forward.

(Y/n) shook her head a little.

"You're pretty timid, you know."

She looked towards Osomatsu in shock, her face quickly slipping into sadness before she looked down at the stone underneath her feet.

"I don't think it's a bad thing."

"...'a castle built on cracked stone will fall to ruin'," (Y/n) muttered softly, the heavy words filling the silence despite her quiet tone, "I've been told over and over that I will never amount to much besides a pawn for marriage...and I know that they're right."

Both princes remained quiet.

"That's why my parents have had me meet with many eligible bachelors from different families..." She started to talk a little louder, pressing her hands up to her face to hide away from the looks she was getting, "If I can't prove useful in any other way, then what other choice do I have than to follow my parents' wishes?"

"Then," Karamatsu asked gently, "What do

you

really want from a marriage?"

"I want to find someone that can understand my feelings..." Her hands slowly fell away from her face, revealing tear marks that smeared the charcoal outlining her eyes, "I didn't ask to be born into nobility..."

Karamatsu looked towards Osomatsu, both of them nodding to each other before Osomatsu stood up and walked to (y/n).

"Let's go back to the garden, then...you seemed happy there."

I clutched the letters in my hands tightly, the rumble of the carriage droning on as the horses pulled the wheeled vehicle down the dirt road. The expanse

of forest on the edges of the wide road gave way to the familiar looking plains, a vast sea of green that stretched into large golden patches further from the road. The carriage swiftly moved over a small bump, the crinkle of paper drawing my attention back towards the two letters in my hands.

One letter was from Prince Karamatsu. His writing was neatly lined on the paper, the words easy to read and explaining much in a few sentences. He wrote of the happenings in his kingdom, about the distress that his parents were under and the small uprising that had been silenced almost as quickly as it started. Beautifully written words expressed a longing to see me again, but knowing that asking for such a thing would be seen by others as an act beyond friendship, stating that my constant letters were enough to keep him appeased.

The other letter was from Prince Osomatsu, the scrawling not nearly as nice as the younger twin's handwriting. He spoke of the uprising in more detail, as he was sent as one of the commanders to quell the town. There wasn't much bloodshed, or so he complained, as most of the fighting took place the previous day and he was sent there to ensure peace was held until an agreement was signed. The prince also spoke of seeing me once more, saying that it would be an honor to witness the 'strong duchess I had become'.

I looked out towards the rolling fields of green, seeing the dirt road turn into a large city placed near the top of a hill.

As much as I wanted to be here for pleasure, this was purely a meeting for business at the

Grand Duchess' request

.

My mother was sick at home, but she was adamant about marrying into any royal family, trying year after year to appease the many nobles and royalty that surrounded our tiny land. I had been shown off to all kinds of men, from the ones who were old enough to be called 'father' to those that were twice under my age.

Only two stood out in my mind: the twin princes that had managed to curb my mother's fury for the days I had visited them. They enraged her, and her vicious taunts that I heard in private were enough to have her beheaded should they be uttered in the wrong presence.

Despite my mother being sick at home, I was still pressed tightly under her thumb.

Looking across the carriage, I glanced at the man sitting opposite me, his stern black eyes never leaving my form. The styled dark brown hair was kept close to his head, a frown forever pressing his lips downwards.

Lord Bernard Stylern. My mother's figurative right hand and voice when she couldn't attend important meetings herself.

"Is there something amiss, your Grace?" His voice was rough, destroyed by the years of commanding armies on my family's behalf.

"...no..." I tore my eyes away from him, watching the passing city outside the window as the carriage moved towards the castle. My hands barely tightened on the parchment papers, swallowing the lump of nervousness that suddenly formed in my throat. I had written to both princes with details of my arrival and the plight that would follow me like a shadow, silently praying that they'd be there.

The horse-drawn carriage made its way up the slope of the hill, slowing down when it came closer to the crest near the top and pulling into the grand carriageway in front of the castle. Lord Bernard exited the carriage first, looking around to ensure that it was safe to leave before he offered his arm. I had to take it, lightly touching my gloved fingers to the jacket sleeve fabric as I stepped down. The bulky dress trailed after me, slowing me down like a heavy weight.

It was my mother's idea to dress me in one of her older gowns, since my small frame would be able to squeeze into it with the help of a corset.

I

hated

it.

My dresses were light in comparison and always left my lungs with plenty of room to breathe, while the corset acted like a cage around my entire torso, forcing me to sit up straight, stand straight, breathe lightly, and gave the public the image that I was a noblewoman of grace and poise.

As I made my way towards the throne room with Lord Bernard close to my side, I lowered my eyes as I heard my full title announced before His and Her Majesty. Following the training that had been pounded into my head, I gave a deep curtsy while Lord Bernard bowed low, both of us coming up at the same time and proceeding down the carpet towards the king and queen.

The two smaller thrones sitting near the king's throne were empty and my heart fell as far as the corset allowed it to.

"Your Excellency," Lord Bernard called out in a firm voice, once more bowing as he spoke the king's and queen's titles, "Your Highness. I am here on behalf of Grand Duchess Mariana Okente of Birchwell to present her daughter, Duchess (Y/n) (L/n) of Birchwell for one of your sons' hand in marriage. As per the letter we've received from you almost a month ago, we have the dowry ready to be shipped upon your gracious acceptance."

I tightened my grip on the sides of my dress, struggling to keep my face as straight as I could.

This wasn't just a regular meeting for 'business'...

this was the final meeting for a marriage arrangement!

"It would honor me greatly to welcome Duchess (Y/n) into our family," The King commented, a wide smile on his face before it slightly fell, "However, both of the princes are currently indisposed for their duties. They will return tonight before the sun falls beneath the horizon. You're welcome to wait here for their official answer."

"...Of course, Your Highness," Lord Bernard gave another bow, catching my eye with a small glare before I quickly gave a short curtsy in response to what the King said. Without much further word, we were escorted away from the throne room and towards the guest quarters where I was expected to stay for the entire day under the ever-watchful eye of Lord Bernard.

The door to the room stayed closed as the strict man positioned a chair between the small sitting area in the room and the doorway, acting as a gatekeeper to ensure that I didn't wander off anywhere. I turned away and looked towards the large window that looked out onto a small part of the massive garden, quietly taking out the letters that I had hidden in the bodice and holding onto them for some form of comfort. Sunset was still hours away, stuck inside while the place I would much rather be could be seen from the window.

My feet began to ache and I promptly took a seat near the window, still looking out at the garden edge as the sky began to take on a lighter orange tinge.

A light conversation caught my ears, turning my head as I heard jovial laughter echo through the halls, the talking coming closer to the room. Lord Bernard looked towards the growing volume of the conversation, getting to his feet and partially opening the doorway before two figures walked past the room.

Both were men around my age, their dark locks neatly combed to just past their ears in similar hairstyles.

One wore a more decorated outfit, the military standing emblazoned on the shirt's shoulders and chest to clearly define the man's figure while giving him an air of dignity. The other wore a less subdued outfit, but it still stood out next to the display of bravery as the shoulder cape marked the man as a high-ranking diplomat.

Lord Bernard quickly bowed as the men kept walking past the room, their conversation making them oblivious to their surroundings. I stood up as the two men walked by, their features catching my eye.

It had been more than eight years since I had last seen Prince Osomatsu and Prince Karamatsu, but I couldn't forget their faces. A small pang of hurt embedded itself into my chest as my mother's phantom chiding voice claimed that both princes had forgotten about me, their hearts already set on some worthy woman that caught their fancies more than just a pitiful and timid person like me.

I glanced back out the window towards the garden, wanting nothing more than to run back into the hedge maze that had kept me safe for that one day--

"Where are you going, your Grace?" Lord Bernard's voice cut through my thoughts, stopping me from leaving the room.

"I...wish to explore the garden while I wait," I tried to keep my voice stern and commanding, but it faltered on the last few words, "It looks beautiful..."

"I'll accompany you," The tone of Bernard's voice sounded like a disapproving parent wanting the child to experience a bad outcome for a lesson to be learned.

"...very well..."

I couldn't lose him, no matter where I went in the royal garden. Lord Bernard was always close to my heels, keeping an eye on me and watching whatever I was doing intently.

It was

suffocating

.

The freedom that I yearned for in the garden had been quickly taken away from me as my mother's shadow given flesh remained by my side, his eyes always questioning and judging every move I made. Sometimes it seemed like he had the mind to physically abuse me just like my mother if I wasn't at the castle.

I bent down near some bright orange flowers, noticing the smaller buds that formed the larger clusters of 'flowers'. The five petals of each bud spread out that circled the tiny bud that sprouted in the center.

"The butterfly weed is beautiful around this time of year," A male voice cut through the silence of the garden, drawing my attention from the flower bush to the man standing a few feet behind me, "An appropriate flower for the look upon your face, Your Grace..."

I quickly stood up and gave a curtsy, seeing Lord Bernard distracted with someone else near the end of the bush row. A gentle hand reached down and pulled me out of the curtsy, taking my hand in his before leading me away from Lord Bernard and the other man. The dark red shoulder cape caught the dying light of the sun, bringing my attention towards the man's face to see Karamatsu smiling down at me.

"Prin--"

He raised a finger to his lips, silencing me as he led me towards the hedge maze, quickly pulling me in after him. I watched in amazement as he expertly ducked around corners before leading me into a short dead-end, the path out of the way and hidden from view of the main walkway. We panted as we caught our breath before I looked over to him, elation bubbling up and turning into a light laughter. Karamatsu glanced over to me as the smile returned to his face.

"Pardon the intrusion, Duchess (Y/n), but you looked like you were miserable in your little part of paradise," He straightened himself out before giving a small bow. I returned it with a short curtsy before reaching out towards him, my arms wrapping around his chest as I buried my face into the dark shoulder cape, "Hey...are you okay?"

"I'm much better now," I felt his hands lightly rest on my hips, "When I saw you both earlier, I was so sad that you didn't seem to notice me."

"I'm sorry for that, (y/n)...we hadn't seen each other in a few weeks and wanted to catch up," Karamatsu held my gaze as I pulled myself away from him, wiping away my tears with my hands as his still held onto my waist,

"We were notified that you were here when we got to our rooms and found yours empty when we walked by the guest room again."

"Not that we minded chasing you down again," A deeper voice cut in from behind, drawing my attention to the well-built form of Osomatsu standing by the entrance of the dead-end, "I could tell why you looked so sad, now...That guy definitely has infantry blood running deep in his veins."

"Lord Bernard?" I turned to fully face Osomatsu, Karamatsu's hands falling from my waist as I went to give the other twin prince a hug as well, not caring that I shouldn't even be alone with either of them at my age, "He's my mother's favorite..."

"Well, I managed to convince him that I'd come find you and escort you back to give my response to your

wonderful

mother's proposal," Osomatsu accepted the hug just as Karamatsu did. I frowned as I pulled away from the hug, looking at both princes.

"You...don't have to."

"What do you mean?" Both responded as one, Osomatsu raising an eyebrow as Karamatsu slightly cocked his head to the side.

"The Grand Duchess has arranged for one of the neighboring rulers to take my hand in marriage," I lowered my head a little, "She had a suspicion that you both would deny me considering the past we've had together since you've both denied the proposal thus far, and how you have seen me act as...as a failure of a duchess."

"A failure...?"

"If your hand is already proposed to someone else, then I guess there's only one thing to do," Osomatsu looked towards Karamatsu with a smirk, taking my hand and leading me out of the hedge garden and past the bewildered-looking Lord Bernard. Karamatsu was close behind, following his brother's

footsteps as we all made our way towards a smaller room where the king and queen were winding down for the evening. I couldn't slow down or pull my hand from Osomatsu's strong grip before he pushed the door open wide.

"I want to marry Duchess (Y/n) (L/n) of Birchwell!"

I started in shock as both Karamatsu and Osomatsu spoke as one, both of them standing in front of me as they looked towards their parents. Fighting down a blush that was sure to show through the scant makeup I had on, I quietly stood behind the twins.

"Very well," The king's response was just as stunning. I could see Osomatsu and Karamatsu flinch in surprise a little when the king spoke, "I invoke the rule of polyandry and will send a letter to the Grand Duchess of Birchwell for final details."

Brothers and Little Sister!Reader

Inspired by ruruka_'s prompt.

Osomatsu groaned as he sat up in the shared futon, letting his eyes stay closed for a few more moments before opening them to the reality of being surrounded by five others that shared his face. A different noise downstairs drew his attention, his ears picking up the light laughter of a child.

The laughter stirred the other sleepy brothers, all of them racing to get dressed and rush downstairs.

She wasn't supposed to be coming over until later!

Choromatsu thought with gritted teeth, hurriedly buttoning his white shirt before slipping his trademark green hooded sweatshirt over his head.

You know how late we can sleep!

Osomatsu quickly countered as he ruffled his hair to look presentable enough, ducking through the bedroom door first and practically flying down the stairs. Vocal protests sounded behind him as a wide smirk rested on his lips, opening the living room sliding door to see two adults older than him sitting across from each other at the table with a small child sitting on one of their laps, a white sheet of paper spread out in front of the child with a scattering of crayons across the tabletop.

"There they are," Mrs. Matsuno called out, her tone friendly but the look warning Osomatsu to not oversleep next time, "The men of the hour."

"What about us now?" Osomatsu raised an eyebrow as he sat heavily next to the other woman holding the child, the little girl crying out in joy as she tried to climb into his lap.

"I'm sorry to ask this on such short notice, but I need to leave town for the remainder of the day," The woman's voice was soft-spoken, "Osomatsu, I

know that (y/n) is safe in your and your brothers' hands, so would you be willing to take care of her until my husband picks her up tonight?"

Osomatsu watched as (y/n) settled into his lap, dragging her drawing over and continuing it, "That shouldn't be a problem. Is her bag here?"

"Yes," (Y/n)'s mother nodded, "It's by the front door."

"Anything else we can do for you, Mrs. (L/n)?"

"No, that's all. I'm sorry to keep calling on your family when emergencies come up," She stood up after giving a light kiss on (y/n)'s forehead, the young grade-schooler not even paying attention to her.

"That's what good friends are for," Mrs. Matsuno stood at the same time, "I'm happy that my little NEETs can finally put themselves to use."

Osomatsu watched the two women leave the room, leaning back and propping himself up on his hands, his smile partially fading as his five younger brothers walked into the room.

"Heard everything?"

"Babysitting for the day," Karamatsu confirmed as he closed the door, the last one to enter the room. They all sat around the table, a small silence covering the room until Todomatsu spoke up.

"Do we know when her dad's coming by?"

"Probably when Dad comes home since they work in neighboring buildings," Osomatsu groaned a little, unsure of where the youngest brother was taking the conversation.

"Well, since we have about eight hours before (y/n) needs to leave, let's make it interesting with a little game of our own."

The atmosphere darkened between the brothers.

"A competition?" Jyushimatsu laughed a little, his smile widening.

"I'll kick all of your asses," Ichimatsu commented darkly, his focus switching between the brothers.

"I haven't even explained the rules, yet you're already chomping at the bit to get started," Todomatsu sighed, "We'll have turns with little (y/n) throughout the day. The goal is to get her to say her favorite brother."

"We've already done this, though," Choromatsu sighed, his frown becoming more pointed, "She chose Osomatsu."

"Think of it as round two, then," Osomatsu sneered at the third oldest, "I already know that I'm going to win again, so put up some kind of fight for me."

"You can't take her to anything age restricted," Karamatsu cut in, "No video stores or pachinko parlors."

"I know that!" The oldest bit down on each word, sending a glare to the second oldest, "I'm not going to bring (y/n) anywhere she isn't supposed to be."

"That goes for you guys, too," Karamatsu switched his focus to the others, catching them off-guard, "Osomatsu may be the more outspoken one that does it, but I know we go to places that (y/n) can't be in."

"Fine!" Choromatsu slammed his hands down on the table, the sudden sound startling (y/n) from her drawing and making her look up at him with tears in her eyes, "Ah...no, don't start crying, (y/n)...I wasn't mad at you."

"What did you draw, (y/n)?" Osomatsu fully sat back up and wrapped his left arm around her shoulders, lifting up the paper she had been working on with his right hand.

"Horses," (Y/n) sniffed before something in her drawing caught her eye, a smile spreading wide on her face, "That's me riding one and you all watching!"

"Do you like horses?" Osomatsu caught the shocked look on his brothers' faces, meeting them all with a mischievous sneer.

Don't you dare...!

Choromatsu warned heavily.

You can't bring her to the races! She's too young!

Todomatsu drew his lips taut, his eyes nearly popping from their sockets as he glared at Osomatsu.

She's too young for

gambling

...not for watching,

Osomatsu laughed internally, narrowing his eyes in victory.

"I really like horses!" (Y/n) laughed, looking up at Osomatsu, "Can we go see some, big brother?"

"Of course we can," The oldest smiled kindly down at her, "We'll leave when you've finished putting all of your things away. Don't want to leave the house in a mess, right?"

"Right!" She cheerfully laughed as she gathered the drawing and crayons in her arms, climbing off of Osomatsu's lap and starting to head towards the door. Ichimatsu scrambled to stand up, opening the door for (y/n) and watching to make sure that she didn't fall on the way to put the things in her little travel bag.

"How long will each of us have her?" Osomatsu switched his focus to Todomatsu.

"Let's say fifty minutes," A cheeky smirk rested on Todomatsu's face as he quickly thought how the timeline would work between the six brothers,

"That'll give us five hours in total, and our dads should be back shortly after that."

"Since Osomatsu already claimed the first block, let's do this in age order," Karamatsu offered.

"Leaving me for last?" The youngest scoffed, "Fine. I'll accept that."

"Better hope you guys can do better than

her favorite animal

," Osomatsu stood up and scooped (y/n) up in his arms, slinging her care bag over his shoulder after putting his shoes on, "After all,

I'm her favorite big brother

."

(Y/n) cheered with the crowd, jumping a few times in Osomatsu's arms in excitement as her chosen horses crossed the finish line. They weren't in first place, but that didn't seem to matter to her.

As the crowd sat back down or started to leave the stands, Osomatsu settled back into his seat, setting (y/n) back in hers. She had instantly picked out the ones she wanted to watch when the horses were being walked around the track, liking the chestnut- or chocolate-colored horses.

"There are a few more races today, (y/n)," Osomatsu took a swing from a bottle of water, forgoing his usual sake, "Did you want to stay and watch them?"

"There's more?" It was almost like he had told her that Santa was real, "I wanna see all of the horses!"

"We can't stay for very long, but there's probably another two races that we can see," He kept a close eye on the track, watching the cleaning crew start

to smooth out the sand track.

"Big brother?" The tone (y/n) used drew his attention back to her, "Were you mad at the others before we left home? Is that why they're not here?"

"No, nothing like that at all," He leaned down and pressed his cheek against hers, sitting back up after a few seconds, "There's just a little game going on between us."

"What's the game? Can I play, too?" Her colored eyes brightened a little.

"You're already playing with us, (y/n). They're just trying to see if they can be a better big brother to you."

"But...you're my favorite, Osomatsu," The happiness in her eyes was enough to send Osomatsu's heart soaring, instantly wishing he had a cellphone to rub the confession in the others' faces.

"I like being your favorite, (y/n)," He smiled down at her, looking up to see that the next set of horses were starting to be walked on the track, "Oh, there's another race getting ready to start. Which ones will you be cheering for this time?"

(Y/n) strained to see from her spot, grunting a little until Osomatsu picked her up to set her on his lap. Thanking him, she focused once more on the horses, her face screwing up in thought.

"That one, and that one!" She pointed to two different horses, one that was completely black and the other was white with brown spots. Osomatsu glanced at the racing card to see that she had picked Red Wins All and Big Brother, a coy smile settling on his face as he circled both names before tucking the card into his pocket.

The racing card would be like adding salt to the wound when he won again.

Had he been betting, he would've won some money with (y/n)'s choices.

"You're a few minutes late," Karamatsu stood up from the bench outside the racing track, catching Osomatsu's eye as the older brother held (y/n)'s hand. Osomatsu held out the bag for the younger to grab, waiting to hand (y/n) over until Karamatsu was ready.

"The last race ran a little bit long due to a fault, but I didn't run off with her."

"I'm surprised that you didn't," Karamatsu took (y/n) by the hand, "Didn't brainwash her, did you?"

"Not at all," Osomatsu gave a confident smile while holding both hands up in surrender, "I'm fairly confident about who's going to win this game."

"Where are we going, Karamatsu?" (Y/n) tugged at his hand, drawing both mens' attention down to her, "Is it somewhere fun?"

"I think you'll enjoy it, (y/n)," Karamatsu instantly responded with a smile on his face, "Say goodbye to Osomatsu. You'll see him again tonight at our house."

"Okay," (Y/n) looked towards Osomatsu, breaking free from Karamatsu to give him a hug, "I'll see you tonight, big brother! Watching the horses was fun!"

"Glad to hear," Osomatsu laughed a little as he stooped down to receive the hug, "Stay with Karamatsu now, okay?"

"I will," She offered a wide smile before reaching up for Karamatsu's hand, grasping onto three of his fingers tightly before being led away, "Bye, Osomatsu!"

Osomatsu only waved back at her, his form disappearing in the crowd as Karamatsu led her down the street.

The only noise between (y/n) and Karamatsu was the city's ambient sounds, cars honking in the distance while the click of heeled shoes hit the pavement.

"Where are we going?" Karamatsu could barely hear her over the din, quickly kneeling down to pick (y/n) up and let her rest on his hip.

"You told me a long time ago that you liked to listen to me sing, so I'm taking you to your favorite park," He adjusted the shoulder strap of his guitar case, careful to not hit (y/n), "I've only got you for almost an hour before Choromatsu comes to pick you up, so I thought that when you get tired of my playing, you could play with the other kids at the park."

"But I like your singing, Karamatsu!" She reached up and took his sunglasses from his face, haphazardly placing them on her own face. Karamatsu withheld a sharp laugh at the sight of the oversized sunglasses sliding down her nose, opting for pulling out a spare set he had and replacing the ones she was now wearing.

"I appreciate the compliment, little (y/n), but not even Jyushimatsu can tolerate my singing for more than a song."

"That's because Jyushimatsu can't sit still for more than five minutes," (Y/n) pushed the borrowed pair up on her face, her tongue poking out between her lips in concentration.

"That may be true. Regardless, I also know that there's a few food trucks near the park that we could grab a bite to eat at," Karamatsu tossed (y/n) up a little to readjust her position on his hip, getting her into a more comfortable grip, "There's sandwiches, crepes, and an ice cream vendor when I checked a little while ago."

"Crepes?" He could almost see the stars in her eyes at the mention of the sweet treat, "Do you know if they have strawberry? Or chocolate? Or chocolate banana?"

"We'll have to check when we get there, (y/n). It's not too far now," He recognized the area that they were entering, knowing that the park was only a few more blocks away.

"Hey, Karamatsu?"

"Yes?"

"Are you okay with me calling you my big brother? Even though we're not related?" Karamatsu shifted his gaze over to the eight-year-old, catching her sad tone as she leaned her head against his shoulder, "You don't think...it's gross?"

"Why would I think it's gross to be called a big brother?" His tone softened in response, slowing his pace a little.

"Because you're a lot older than me. Some of my classmates have older siblings, but only by a few years...so when I told them that I have six adult brothers, they all laughed and called me gross."

Karamatsu stopped in the crosswalk, his focus completely on her small form in his arms, "(Y/n), if they think that you calling us your brothers is gross, then let them think that. That doesn't change how you think of us, and it definitely won't change how we think of you as our little sister. Have you told anyone else this?"

"No..." (Y/n) shook her head slowly.

"Why not?"

"Because Osomatsu would get mad at my classmates."

"Well --" Karamatsu closed his eyes in understanding, his eyebrows partially furrowing as he winced a little, "-- that may be true, but I'm sure that he would still want to know. You're not getting bullied for it, are you?"

"No, just ignored."

"(Y/n), I want you to know that if you do start to get bullied, please tell someone. If it isn't us, then tell your parents or teacher, okay?" Karamatsu used his free hand to lift (y/n)'s chin up, looking right at her while speaking softly.

"Okay."

Choromatsu walked towards the park that Karamatsu had indicated he'd be at, stuffing his hands into his pockets while letting a grimace settle on his face. While the others couldn't be counted on for being on time for anything, Choromatsu couldn't understand why Karamatsu hadn't dropped off (y/n) at the agreed time.

If he found out that Karamatsu had roped (y/n) into doing something that would scar her for life, the pain of becoming Hatabuu's employees would be miniscule in comparison.

The strum of a guitar caught his ears as he entered the park, drawing his attention towards a small grassy field that was near the outskirts of the area. (Y/n) was trying to sing along with Karamatsu, her voice not as loud as his while she fumbled with some of the longer words.

Relaxing his expression, Choromatsu calmly walked towards the two as the song drew to a close, leaving (y/n) to clap a little bit in the silence after.

"Is it that time already?" Karamatsu caught sight of his younger brother, lowering his right hand from strumming a light tune on the strings, "I'm sorry that I lost track of time..."

"It's not a big issue," Choromatsu gave a heavy sigh, squatting down and looking towards (y/n) while giving her a gentle smile, "Ready to come with me, (y/n)?"

"Yeah!" She stood up and brushed off the dirt from her clothes, clearly a little tired from playing at the park despite the wide smile on her face. (Y/n) hooked her hands behind Choromatsu's neck while he gathered her in his arms, picking her up gently and standing in the same motion, "Will I see Karamatsu at home after?"

"You will," Choromatsu took the bag from Karamatsu's extended hand, the older of the two giving a small smile before setting his hand on (y/n)'s head.

"I've gotta do a few things before the sun sets, but I'll see you when you're back at our house," Karamatsu explained while shouldering his guitar case, "Be good to Choromatsu and the others, all right?"

"I will," (Y/n) laughed a little before watching Karamatsu leave the park, turning back to Choromatsu when he started to walk towards the entrance he had come in through, "Are we doing anything fun?"

"I'm not sure how fun you'll find it," Choromatsu laughed nervously, closing his eyes for a brief moment before looking over at her, "I thought that a loud concert would be too much for you, so instead I opted for a more quieter activity for us to do."

"Which is?" Her eyes widened in anticipation.

"There's a small theater troupe that has a show starting in about five minutes," He focused back on where he was walking, "It's a shorter show, so we won't be late in meeting up with Ichimatsu."

"Yay!" (Y/n) jumped a little in his arms, shifting her weight down to indicate that she wanted to walk. He set her down and held her hand gently as they made their way through the busy city sidewalks towards a smaller theater building.

Ichimatsu heard the excited chittering before looking back to see Choromatsu and (y/n) talking with each other, walking by the alleyway entrance without realizing he was standing there. Lowering his eyelids in disapproval, he tucked his hands into his hoodie front pocket before taking a few steps out onto the sidewalk, sending a glare at his older brother.

Choromatsu froze in place before quickly looking behind him, making eye contact with the dark horse of the sextuplets.

"Ichimatsu, there you are," He nervously laughed, stopping (y/n) in her tracks as he turned around to face the purple-clad brother, "I didn't realize that you meant to meet up here."

"...it's easier," Ichimatsu shifted his gaze to focus on (y/n), secretly wiping off his hand inside the pocket before holding it out towards her, "Want to help feed some cats, (y/n)?"

Her face lit up with happiness, a wide smile stretching across her lips as she let go of Choromatsu's hand, "I wanna help!"

"Know where to meet Jyushimatsu?" Choromatsu took a few steps towards Ichimatsu and slid the bag off of his shoulder, holding it out for him to take. The younger grabbed the sling roughly and held it over his shoulder, the bag resting on his back when it settled from the momentum.

"He told me where."

"Be careful with her, okay?"

"She's not a toddler anymore," Ichimatsu gritted his teeth, frustration building at the nagging, "She'll be fine with me."

Choromatsu lifted his hands up by his head, giving the younger a look of warning before kneeling in front of (y/n), "I'll see you at home, (y/n). Have fun with Ichmatsu, okay?"

"I will!" (Y/n) waved farewell, "I'm gonna help him feed the cats."

"Maybe your favorite cat will be there again," Choromatsu offered a smile before standing up, shooting another look of warning over his shoulder at Ichimatsu while walking off. Ichimatsu met the look with another glare, relaxing his expression when he felt a tug on the sleeve of his sweatshirt.

"Ichimatsu, are you mad at Choromatsu for being late?"

"...no, I'm not."

"He tried to be on time, since the others were running late," (Y/n) let her hand fall down to his hand, holding his ring finger and pinky in a loose grip, "So, please don't be mad at him."

"I'm not mad at him," Ichimatsu looked up to watch Choromatsu's back disappear around a building corner, "I just don't know how to interact with him..."

"But you're brothers."

"Just because we're related doesn't mean that we all get along," He guided her into the alleyway, his footsteps silent, "You're an only child, so you don't know what it's like."

"I kinda do," (Y/n) grew quiet, "Not from anything I know, but some of my classmates get into fights with their siblings and complain about it. I don't think it's a good thing to keep being mad at someone in your family."

"I'm not mad at him, (y/n). I just don't know how to interact with him when it's just the two of us."

"Well..." She trailed off for a few moments before speaking again, "Just don't get into a fight."

"It probably won't," Ichimatsu sighed a little, stopping when they were near the back wall of the alley. Setting the bag down on the ground, he clicked his tongue between slightly pursed lips, kneeling down and holding out his free hand towards one of the open boxes. He heard (y/n) hold her breath as she let his other hand go, watching with rapt attention as a few young kittens cautiously crawled out from the box.

He pulled out a small drink container from his hoodie pocket, opening it and using the wide cap as a drink holder of sorts, pouring some of the white liquid from the container into the cap. The kittens gathered around the cap and began lapping at it, Ichimatsu refilling the cap until they no longer wanted any more.

"What is that?"

"Milk formula for kittens," Ichimatsu kept his voice quiet, "I couldn't find the mother, so I decided to give them a chance to live on their own."

"They're so cute..."

"They are, but don't touch them," He warned as (y/n) had started to reach out her hand, "There's no guarantee that their mom will take them back when she comes to retrieve them, not with them smelling like humans."

"Oh..." (Y/n) instantly tucked her hands behind her back and squatted a little behind Ichimatsu, watching the kittens start to waddle back to the box, "Do you take care of them when their mom isn't here?"

"As much as any human could at this point," Ichimatsu looked at (y/n) from the corner of his eye, "I gave them a blanket to keep warm in, and since it's been pushed around, their mom is clearly using it as a nest. The only thing I actively give them is the milk."

"Have you seen the mom?"

"Not physically, but there are signs that she returns to her kittens."

"Then...they have a family," (Y/n) stifled a yawn, Ichimatsu taking note of it before shifting his position and taking her up in his arms, "No...I'm fine..."

"Clearly," He headed out of the alley and towards a nearby local picnic area that was usually quiet around this time of day, "We'll go look at cats when you wake up, okay?"

"Promise?"

"Promise."

Jyushimatsu jumped up from his spot on the bench when he saw Ichimatsu walking towards the baseball park, halting his own progress and slapping both hands over his mouth when he realized that (y/n) was asleep in Ichimatsu's arms. The older of the two gave a small huff of amusement before nodding towards the bench that Jyushimatsu was sitting on, the baseball equipment a telltale sign of the activity he wanted to do with (y/n).

"How long has she been sleeping?" Jyushimatsu kept as quiet as he could, following Ichimatsu's lead and sitting next to them on the bench, moving aside the sports equipment for more room.

"Only for about twenty minutes," Ichimatsu was equally as quiet, though it was easier for him to achieve the volume, "The older three must've tuckered her out."

"I don't mind her sleeping through my time," The yellow-clad brother gave a wide smile, "I know she only plays baseball with me because it's what I really like."

"Are you sure? Maybe she does it because you find it to be really fun."

Both brothers stilled when (y/n) adjusted herself in Ichimatsu's arms, switching her head from one shoulder to the other.

"I've already had to break a promise with her," Ichimatsu leaned his head back a little, "If only there was more time we had."

"What was the promise?"

"That we would go look at cats when she woke up."

"It's not like this is the last time you're seeing her, big brother Ichimatsu," Jyushimatsu offered a wide smile, "I'm sure that she'll forgive you."

"What about forgiving...?" (Y/n) muttered before yawning, pressing her hands into Ichimatsu's shoulders and leaning back to sit upright.

"If you still wanted to nap, you could," Ichimatsu loosened his grip as (y/n) climbed down onto the bench next to him, stifling another yawn before looking to see Jyushimatsu sitting on the other side of Ichimatsu.

"Jyushimatsu, hello."

"Nap well, (y/n)?" Jyushimatsu's usual smile was back in place, "I didn't want to wake you up."

"It was a good nap," She looked up towards the lights that suddenly illuminated the baseball park, seeing the darkening sky beyond them, "Is it already evening?"

"It looks that way," Ichimatsu stood up, leaving the bag he was given where it lay on the bench, "Sunset was just a few moments ago, so after Todomatsu brings you home, dinner should be waiting for you."

"Wait," She reached out and grabbed a little bit of his hoodie sleeve, stopping him from walking away, "Can...we go visit the cats soon?"

Ichimatsu's expression softened, offering a rare smile, "Whenever you want to."

Jyushimatsu stood up when Ichimatsu was out of visual range, hoisting up a bat over his shoulder while looking down at (y/n), "I know that it's getting late, but would you like to get a game in before Todomatsu picks you up?"

"Yeah!" (Y/n) jumped off the bench with a large smile, grabbing a few balls from the basket and running towards the pitching mound.

Todomatsu withheld a scream of horror, his lips drawing tight across his teeth as he watched Jyushimatsu carry (y/n) on his shoulders. Both of them were dirty, like they had gotten caught in the middle of a rainstorm while rolling around in a dirt field.

"What the heck happened?!" The youngest jumped up from the outside seat of the cafe, running towards the two and wiping off some of the dirt on (y/n)'s face with a spare handkerchief.

"We played a baseball game before the sprinkler system turned on," Jyushimatsu laughed, "It was a better idea to just run around in the water."

"Did you want us to get killed by Mom!?" Todomatsu dragged (y/n) down from the older's shoulders, taking in the state of her clothing and internally wondering how they were going to get her clothes cleaned before her father

picked her up in about two hours. Yanking the bag from Jyushimatsu's shoulders, Todomatsu opened the large zippered compartment and found a few changes of clothes, each complete with their own 'dirty' bag.

"It's not like it's the first time I've been dirty, Totty," (Y/n) laughed as Jyushimatsu stooped down and tried to tickle her sides, pushing his hands away playfully, "Mom and Dad aren't going to really care."

"Maybe your parents won't, but I know that Mom tends to get mad about these kinds of things," Todomatsu brought out a sealed bag of clean clothes, "Well, this cramps up my plans, but whatever..."

"Sorry, Totty," Jyushimatsu stood to his full height with a frown on his face, "I got so caught up in having fun that I didn't think about your turn..."

"It's not a problem," The youngest huffed, "Go get yourself cleaned off before dinner. I'll take care of (y/n)."

"Sorry..." Both Jyushimatsu and (y/n) apologized at the same time. The youngest brother took (y/n)'s hand in his, shouldering the care bag while leading her towards one of the closer public baths.

"You don't have anything to apologize for, (y/n). You were just having fun with Jyushimatsu and got carried away," He offered a comforting smile to the eight-year-old, seeing her return the smile as he led her towards the baths.

Osomatsu glanced up as he heard the front door open, Todomatsu announcing that he was home with (y/n). The rest of the brothers were gathered around the table in the living room, dinner spread out in front of them as they picked what they wanted to eat.

"Welcome back, you two."

"Thanks," Todomatsu let the care bag slide down his left arm near the front door, kicking off his shoes while (y/n) did the same. The older four realized

that she was in different clothes than when they had seen her earlier, looking towards Todomatsu suspiciously, "Stop it. She was dirty after being with Jyushimatsu, so we took a bath before coming home."

Their glares shifted towards the fifth brother who kept eating his food, staring straight ahead without focusing on anything.

"Uh-huh...well, get in here. Food's still warm," Osomatsu moved over a little, making Todomatsu curl his lip in disgust that his own place was now sandwiched between Osomatsu and Ichimatsu. A space opened up between Karamatsu and Osomatsu for (y/n) to sit, "We saved you a plate, (y/n)."

"Yay!" She happily crawled into her new seat, grabbing her bowl and taking a few things from the hot pot in the middle of the table, "This looks good, Mrs. Matsuno!"

"You're welcome to have as much as you want," Mrs. Matsuno called out from the kitchen, eating at the small table in that room, "I bought extras."

"I want this...and this..." (Y/n) took the ladle and scooped some broth into the bowl before picking up her preferred food from the pot, blowing on it a little before biting down.

After Todomatsu squeezed in between Osomatsu and Ichimatsu, a comfortable silence settled over the room as they ate.

"So, (y/n)," Choromatsu started talking after he finished eating, "Did you have an exciting day?"

"I did!" (Y/n) hurriedly swallowed the food in her mouth before speaking more, "I got to see horses with Osomatsu, sang with Karamatsu, watched that play with you, fed some cute kittens with Ichimatsu, played baseball with Jyushimatsu, and took a bath with Todomatsu. I had a really fun time!"

"Was there anything that you liked more than the others?" Osomatsu pressed, resting his hand on the winning card still in his pants pocket.

(Y/n) stayed silent while thinking about what she had done throughout the afternoon into the evening. The brothers finished their food quietly while she thought, waiting patiently for her to speak again.

"I liked all of it," She laughed, setting the bowl down, "I can't really say that there was one part better than the other, and since I did so many different things, there's no way I can compare them all together."

"Ah, really?" Karamatsu leaned back, resting on his hands as a small sigh of disappointment escaped his lips, "You looked like you had a fun time at the park with me."

"I did, but I also had fun with the others," (Y/n) gave him a wide smile, "You guys had said that this was a game to see which one would be my favorite big brother, right?"

The sextuplets nodded as one.

"Then I guess it's a tie between you all!" (Y/n) laughed again, a combined wave of frustration and relief washing through the brothers.

"If there's a round three," Osomatsu said, a relaxed smile resting on his lips, "would you like to join the game again?"

"Sure," She looked over at him, "But I doubt you're going to do better next time."

"Oh?" He lowered his eyelids as the smirk turned coy, "We'll see about that, little sis."

MentalModel!Brothers and Reader

This is now it's own stand-alone story, written under the title of 'Defection'. Go check it out!

(Inspired by the CG anime 'Arpeggio of Blue Steel -Ars Nova-' by Ark Performance.)

(English subtitles available in the video.

Please note that since I want to have the Matsuno brothers remain as male, they will be Mental Models of German warships due to the fact that the German military refer to their naval ships as 'he', instead of the typical female pronouns of other countries. This will not impact anything else about the characters.

For further clarification, the Matsuno brothers will be different classifications of warships.)

"

It is presently unknown who or what created these vessels. Even their purpose is not completely clear: while the 'Fleet of Fog' annihilates anyone who dares to sail into the seas and claims that destroying humankind is their mission, they have never attacked human settlements or facilities ashore. In fact, they have standing orders to avoid any attack on coastal or inland settlements.

Originally, the 'Fleet of Fog' began its (re)activation on the 1st of May of 1945; however, due to the disappearance of the Admiralty Code, the process was halted and resumed only in the beginning of the second decade of the 21st century. Starting in the year 2012, sightings of 'ghost ships' were reported all around the world. Eyewitnesses always stated that these ships

looked like World War II warships and that they always appear surrounded by thick fog. Such sightings, while not that rare, weren't discussed much. This changed in the year 2038, when the number of "ghost warship" sightings increased greatly.

Many investigations into these 'ghost warships' were launched, but nothing concrete was discovered. At one point in 2038 the 'ghost warships' trespassed into Russian waters and were attacked by a patrol fleet. The said patrol fleet was annihilated, revealing just how powerful these 'ghost warships' were.

Around December of 2038, the 'ghost warships' went on the offensive and began attacking human naval forces all over the world. By 2039, humanity had lost all of its battles against this new threat, which was now referred to as the 'Fleet of Fog'.

The human vessels that had survived thus far were all brought together and a great multinational fleet was formed. This eventually led to what became known as the "Great Naval Battle". The battle lasted for two days and humans lost 70% of what remained from their fleets and suffered over 600,000 casualties. The few ships that survived the 'Great Naval Battle' were placed in hidden underground docks and mothballed until such time as a way to combat the 'Fleet of Fog' was found. Following their victory, the "Fleet of Fog" formed a global blockade and isolated all inhabited continents and islands from each other.

" -

excerpt of a history textbook, unknown author

Oso -

Tirpitz

(battleship, Bismarck class)

Kara -

Scharnhorst

(battleship, Scharnhorst class)

Choro -

U-96

(submarine, Type VIIC U-boat)

Ichi -

U-99

(submarine, Type VIIB U-boat)

Jyushi -

Z3 Max Shultz

(destroyer, Type 1934 class)

Todo -

Admiral Hipper

(heavy cruiser, Hipper class)

"Ms. (Y/n), wait."

A commanding voice called out from behind me as I attempted to leave the office, a young man around my age standing by the doorway narrowing his eyes in disapproval of the voice's demand. Closing my own eyes briefly before turning to face the person who had called my name, l met their firm gaze as my own colored hues stared back at me from under a furrowed brow.

"Are you certain of what you're doing? Not only will you cross dangerous waters with the cargo, but you're choosing to sail with only those in your fleet," The stern man's words didn't form a question, "We have some ships and able-bodied men who are willing to ensure that England gets this cargo."

"You need them for your own defensive line," I rested a hand on my left hip, "The Fleet of Fog has been pushing in more since they detected the shipyards in Boston becoming more active recently."

"(Y/n)--"

"Dad, I'll be fine," Returning my father's worried look with a smile, I motioned towards the young man by the door, "My fleet can handle itself and has crossed the Atlantic a few times without much trouble. The only thing that concerns me is the updated position of

Hood

's fleet."

"With permission, captain," The man by the door spoke up, drawing both mine and my father's attention towards him. I gave him a nod to continue, "

Hood

and her fleet have crossed my path before and I was able to outrun her range. However, with the larger ships in your fleet, we will be forced to slow down to accommodate their speed.

Tirpitz

and

Scharnhorst

may need to stay here at New London, both to reduce the fleet's size and to increase our average surface speed."

"You can't leave those ships here," My father interjected, standing up from his desk as he glared at the young man, "We do

not

have the dock space to keep them hidden. If you were wanting to leave

Hipper

or the other smaller ships, then we'd have an agreement."

His colored eyes focused back on me, "But those Fog battleships

cannot

stay docked here."

"Then we have our answer,

Hipper

," I sighed as I looked back at the young man, his eyes locking with mine before nodding. I moved to my father's desk and pressed the tip of my index finger on our port of call, tracing our route as I spoke it outloud, "I'll take my small fleet and head north, sailing just along the shores of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland before heading towards Iceland. That should divert us from where

Hood

has her fleet currently positioned and allow us to sneak around the northern edge into European waters."

"You'll still have to get around

New Jersey

and her small fleet," The military man pointed to the waters just south of the port, "She's been moving slowly northwards since this morning."

"Then a sooner departure would be better," I stood up, looking back at Hipper, "Is the fleet resupply finished?"

He remained silent for a short while before nodding, "Yes, captain. Everything is loaded and we are standing by for sailing orders."

"Then we leave now," I quickly turned on my heel and strode out of the office, "I'll send a message when I'm in safer waters, admiral."

"Fair winds and following seas," I could hear the tension in my father's voice, clenching my fists in worry as I moved through the underground naval base towards the exterior floating docks. An echoing pair of footsteps followed my every move, alerting me that

Hipper

was following behind. I cast a glance over my shoulder towards him, softly regarding the focused look on his face as he stared ahead of me.

Hipper

was just a shortened name that he was called by when we were near other humans, his full name shared by the same ship he controlled, the

Admiral Hipper

. He appeared to be a young man around my age, maybe a little older, with short dark hair that fell to the tips of his ears.

Hipper

wore a brownish sweater over a white shirt that was tucked into dark blue capri-style pants, a black scarf thrown about his neck while a loose black beanie rested on his partially kempt hair.

His dark hues glanced over to me before raising an eyebrow in confusion at the eye contact, "Captain?"

"Nothing,

Hipper

...just lost in thought," I sighed inwardly at the rank he continued to call me. I wasn't in the military and had tried multiple times to have him and the others in the fleet call me by my name, but something was hardwired in their mind to see me as nothing else other than a commanding officer.

Taking the long stairway two steps at a time, I pushed through the secured door that led to the temporary outer docks, taking in a deep breath as a dull gray New England afternoon greeted me.

I closed the door after

Hipper

walked through, ensuring that the lock engaged and kept us from entering the hidden entrance to one of the last remaining military yards on the east coast of America. Turning to face the bay, I slightly frowned as the water looked just as gray and choppy as the skies above it.

"We better hurry.

Tirpitz

and

Scharnhorst

are arguing,"

Hipper

picked up his pace and started down the small pathway that led from the metal door hidden in the last few rolls of natural hills down to the shoreline where a temporary docking area had been set up, the blue ballast barrels holding up the metal walkways of the docks.

"Again...?" I followed after him, my eyes traveling from the temporary docks to the six Fleet of Fog ships that rested within the small bay, the inlet

looking very cramped. Two large battleships created a standing barrier around the other four that were wedged close together, sitting within inches of each other's hulls. Two submarines had surfaced between a heavy cruiser and a destroyer, dwarfing the smaller submersible warships in comparison. The battleships were different classes, but nearly the same size and length...and their main turrets were turning to face each other.

My pace quickened when I realized that the patterns along their sides were beginning to glow stronger, seeing

Hipper

race down to the docks and hopping up to the heavy cruiser's deck with ease, pink hexagonal plates appearing with each step he took in mid-air. I staggered down the middle pier that rested between the two submarines, hearing two voices shout out from each battleship while trying to catch my breath. Someone else called out before I had a chance to speak.

"Captain!"

I glanced over to see a young man that appeared identical to

Hipper

shout out, a deep green long-sleeved shirt hanging loose over a pair of dark brown pants. His dark hair was more groomed than

Hipper

's, a deep pointed frown resting on his face as he glared over at the battleship on my right.

"Ah, you're back!" I heard another voice call out from the battleship on my left, seeing a young man peer over the side railing before jumping off. Hexagonal plates of red energy formed underneath his feet as he made his way over the heavy cruiser and other submarine, landing by my side and offering a wide smirk, "Nothing to report during your absence, captain."

The new arrival shared a similar appearance to both previous men, wearing a white hooded sweatshirt that darkened into a deep red color near the wrists and waistline, a black undershirt barely peeking out from the neck of the hoodie. Light brown capri pants covered his upper legs as the calves remained exposed to the elements.

"You mean to say that nothing happened outside of the fleet,

Tirpitz

!" Another voice shouted in disapproval from the second battleship, drawing our attention over to him. He didn't come down from his ship, the turrets moving back into their neutral position as the man folded his arms across his chest, "Captain, why was

Hipper

loaded with extra supplies?"

"We're tasked with bringing some important cargo to Clyde, England...specifically HMNB Clyde. Of the fleet, he's the fastest ship that can hold his own against the Fog. He's the best chance we have of completing our job if we're caught in a fight," I responded as I sucked in a deep breath, "My question to you is why were you both engaging?"

I turned to look at

Tirpitz

standing behind me, his hands quickly lifting behind his head and puckering his lips in a weak attempt at whistling.

"...Same as always," A fifth voice called out from the other submarine, revealing a man sitting on the railing facing the dock. His legs were covered with black pants, a complimenting shirt of purple resting over his shoulders. His hair was much messier than the others, like he absolutely hated trying to take care of it, "They want to be the flagship of your fleet."

"Guys, you already know my thoughts on this matter," I pinched my brow between a thumb and forefinger, "I don't want to have a designated flagship because it'll become too much of a risk. If the Fleet of Fog knows which of you is my flagship, they'll primary you as a target and possibly knock you out of the fight before I can do anything to react."

"Either of the subs could work, too," The green-shirted man suggested before crossing his arms over his chest, "Our radars are powerful enough to detect enemies that are far outside of firing range."

"My decision still stands," I lowered my hand from my face, "I'm sailing with

Scharnhorst

on this course."

"Ahahaha!" A sixth voice shouted out in joy, the last young man in the fleet standing on the bow of his destroyer, "You're always welcome aboard me, captain!"

He jumped up to the railing on the bow, holding onto the leading bow light stand while waving an arm energetically towards me. A black long-sleeved shirt covered his arms while a white shirt with yellow edges was worn over it, partially covered by a black collared vest that ended just above his waist. Brown cargo pants covered his legs, cinched tight at his waist.

This was my fleet: a tiny Fleet of Fog rogues that had identical Mental Models. Each ship was only 'manned' by the Mental Model, a personification of a warship's identity...and they were a handful on their own. I was the "lucky" one to somehow manage six at the same time, despite the infighting that happened.

"We have our orders, then?" The green-clad man looked towards

Hipper

, receiving a nod from him.

"The cargo

Hipper

was loaded with American Navy goods that could help turn the tide of this persistent lockdown, but we've got two obstacles in our way," Moving towards the battleship to my right by way of the small dock, I climbed the rope ladder that extended down from the deck, "

New Jersey

is heading north and we need to outrun her fleet. General quarters, skirt the shoreline north!"

As I shouted my orders, the fleet raised their anchors at the same time and began moving away from the docks. The submarines pulled out first before submerging when the water was deep enough for them, quickly followed by the destroyer and the

Admiral Hipper.

The battleships pulled out of the tiny bay last, their main turrets slightly raised and ready to turn at a moment's notice. I pulled up the rope ladder onto the deck of the battleship I was on, seeing the Mental Model of the

Scharnhorst

keep the watertight door open for me.

His dark red jacket flapped in the wind as the ship was underway, the black tank top left exposed and tucked into his dark blue jeans, the dark brown keeping both shirt and pants in place. His dark hair was tossed about on the wind before he stepped inside the large tower that led to the bridge, allowing me to go first up the tall staircase that zigzagged up the sides.

"I apologize, captain, for my manner while in dock," He started.

"No need," I interrupted as I ascended the stairs, pulling open the bridge door and stepping into the dim room. Lights slowly brightened the room,

illuminating the room as several screens came to life. I moved to each screen to double check the status it was showing, some showing the armaments and armory reservoir and others showing both sonar and ladar systems, the other five ships being picked up between both systems.

"Captain!" I heard the voice of the Mental Model aboard one of the submarines emit from one of the loudspeakers on the bridge, his tone filled with alarm.

"Go ahead, Choro," I responded with his preferred name while traveling in the fleet. All six of the Mental Models wanted to be called something different, especially after their first encounter with the American Navy and only being referred to the ships they controlled. I picked out each name for them, but I had no clue what they meant. They just sounded foreign enough to be unique and were easy to say.

"Incoming from seven o'clock!"

I hastily moved towards the rear most part of the bridge, pressing my hands against the ballistic-proof window and sucked in a shocked gasp, "Kara!"

The

Scharnhorst

underneath me responded immediately, the exterior hull and surfaces of the battleship revealing a hexagonal-patterned field that swallowed the entire ship, hovering just above the armor plates before four yellow-colored beams slammed into the aft section. Each beam hit the energy plating, causing the Klein Field to glow bright red as it absorbed the impact from the shot. My focus snapped back to where the cannon fire had come from, unable to see anything more than a thickening fog start to swallow the bay we had just left, curling around the land as the foggy front moved towards us.

"It's the

New Jersey

fleet," The other submarine Mental Model called out, "They must have a sub in tow if we can see each other at this range."

A low hum reverberated through the bridge as the lights dimmed while Kara walked up next to me, three flat rings of energy spiraling out from his body and orbiting around him at a slow rate. The color of the rings matched the deep blue color of the markings the

Scharnhorst

had along his hull.

"Captain, should I return fire?"

"No," I quickly moved towards the communications station, pulling up the five other Mental Models on holographic screens. They each looked back at me, their own Fields active and ready to fight, the colors creating a rainbow on the display.

"We have a job that needs to be done. Jyushi," I looked towards the Mental Model with yellow light illuminating his body, "Swing behind Kara and smoke 'em."

His smile widened as the destroyer surged ahead and pulled to the right, tightening up the turn until his bow was parallel with Kara's stern and hitting the smoke emitter. While it wasn't thicker than the fog that was chasing us, it was dense enough to scramble any kind of sonar that the pursuing fleet would try to use. Jyushi kept pumping out the smokescreen until he had swung around wide enough to cover both the

Scharnhorst

and the

Tirpitz

. While he was working, I continued giving out orders.

"Ichi and Choro, load up those noise torpedoes in the rear tubes. Fire when ready," I looked over my shoulder to glare at the fog, "I don't want that fleet following us anymore."

Both submarine Mental Models nodded, allowing me to glance over at

Hipper

.

"Todo, you have the course set?"

"Yes, captain," He nodded, a gentle pink glow around his form.

"Lead the fleet, but keep it slow enough that Oso and Kara can keep up at their top speed."

"We can take

New Jersey

out, captain,"

Tirpitz

, or rather Oso, spoke up, a coy smirk resting on his lips as I heard the whir of turrets from across the way, looking over to see the two rear cannons adjust their aim, "Fleet sonar says it's just a handful of small ships."

I kept my footing as Kara adjusted his speed to follow Todo, the

Admiral Hipper

surging forward and slightly adjusting his heading. Moving to the sonar console, I took a long look at what Oso was talking about, the updated positions of the enemy ships popping in and out on the screen as Jyushi's smoke was becoming overpowered by the fog.

Four blips on the sonar appeared, each of them in attack formation while a fifth blip appeared on the second sweep. My fingers clenched onto the sides of the console tighter, the knuckles nearly turning white.

"It's an

Atlanta

-class! Kara, Oso, focus fire on my signal! Jyushi, move right behind Todo!"

Kara's rings spun faster in tighter circles as I heard his rear turrets activate, seeing Oso's rear turrets respond at nearly the same time. Focusing back on the sonar readout in front of me, I heard two muffled explosions far behind Kara, a metallic screeching hanging in the air for a long time.

I continued to watch the sonar carefully, seeing two of the four blips break off from the formation. The cruiser-sized blip, complete with the

Atlanta

-class label, continued forward with the two smaller ships. I narrowed my eyes in frustration.

Where was the

New Jersey

if this was actually her fleet?

"Captain! Ahead!" Ichi called out, his deeper voice snapping my attention to the holographic screen before looking back at the fleet-provided sonar, a large blip appearing just north of our current position, presenting its broadside to us.

"It's

New Jersey

! Evade, evade, evade!" I braced myself as the

Scharnhorst

lurched to the side, nine large streaks of concentrated energy slamming into Oso and Kara. Both battleships took the fire in their respective Klein Fields, Kara's bridge humming with heat as the Klein field dispersed the energy from the attack along the shield.

"Captain!" Several voices called out, most of them sounding a little worried.

"I'm fine! Charge forward towards her! Jyushi, ready torpedoes -- I don't care which kind. Ichi, Choro, follow his lead and get that Fog warship out of our way!" I shouted, recovering from the fall I took when the

Scharnhorst

was hit. Glancing out the rear bridge windows, I saw two destroyers emerge from the fog thousands of meters away, the color draining from my face as I saw the prow of the

Atlanta

-class cruiser pierce the fog after them. Her guns were trained on Kara.

"Oso, Kara! Fire!"

The turrets on the

Scharnhorst

hummed to life, building up an intense blue light from the lower decks before six blasts of deep blue streaked out towards the

Atlanta

-class, flying right into her bow as four red beams collided with her tower. The cruiser slightly leaned to her right from being hit, but she continued

straight towards us.

Kara's bridge took another hit from the front, sending me staggering to the ground before I whipped my head around to focus on what happened. The Klein Field buzzed with more energy, seeing Todo and Jyushi engage

New Jersey

on the surface while torpedo explosions ripped at her broadside from attacks under the water.

The Fog battleship, however, was hellbent on stopping

me

, focusing her fire on where I was. The sight of her entire broadside brought to bear at me was a stunning sight, made even worse when I knew the firepower she was capable of.

"Kara, focus most of the Klein Field around the bridge," My voice was tense, probably from fear. This was the first full fight I'd been in, since the other engagements had been small skirmishes that I was able to run from.

New Jersey

had somehow circled around our sonar and forced us into a trap, leaving us nowhere to run to.

"Incoming, seven o'clock!" Oso called out before something slammed into the bridge of the

Tirpitz

, his amused cackles sounding over the communications link, "Wrong target, idiot~!"

"Todo, give me an update," I held onto the small hand railing bolted underneath the sonar screen.

"She's got thick armor, captain. We're gonna hit her before it breaks," His voice was calm despite the ongoing firefight happening around him.

"I hear you," I looked towards Kara, "You and Oso need to throw what you can at

New Jersey

. Sink her before we get close."

"Yes, captain," He gave a confident nod as he looked out the front of the bridge, the colored rings spiraling tighter once more as his front turrets activated. Oso copied his motions, the two turrets adjusting their aim and opening up as red energy crackled and sparked inside the barrels. Both battleships fired at the same time, streaking over the heavy cruiser and destroyer before piercing through the oversaturated Klein field. Oso cheered over the comms as Ichi laughed darkly, my focus falling back to the pursuing

Atlanta

-class cruiser.

The two destroyers had fallen back while the wake that formed on the cruiser's prow started to shrink, the three warships falling back and seemingly giving up the chase.

"Captain, the

New Jersey

is sunk!" Jyushi called out happily, his laughter strung throughout the announcement.

I rushed to the front windows of the bridge, seeing the sinking hull of the

Iowa

-class battleship, her sides carved out with spherical holes that ate right through her physical armor and into her interior chambers. I instantly recognized what had caused the damage, looking over to Choro and Ichi on the holographic screens. Both submarine Mental Models quickly diverted their gazes as I stood in front of the display.

"I did say that I didn't care about which torpedoes to use, but we don't have many corrosive warheads left," I sighed, looking beyond the screen to see the

Admiral Hipper

pass over the area where the

New Jersey

had sank down to the bottom of the coastline, his wake quickly followed by Jyushi in the destroyer. I could only guess that both submarines had to pass wide of the wreckage as it fell.

"I have eight remaining in my stores," Choro focused back on me, Ichi still looking away.

"...four."

"Ichi, I don't want you launching any more corrosives unless it's a dire situation. I do appreciate the effort, though," I gave him a gentle smile as the Mental Model looked back at me, the battleships sailing over the corpse of the

Iowa

-class battleship, "Another few minutes and we would've had to ram our way through

New Jersey

."

"...it's not a problem," His dark eyes met mine before glancing away again, "No bogeys ahead, captain."

"Todo, keep leading the fleet along the charted course. All ships, hold your shields until we're approaching Nova Scotia. We may have sunk the

New Jersey

, but the

Hornet

is the one in charge of these waters. Keep your eyes out, reload the torpedo bays, and stay in travel formation," I called out, my heart beating violently in my chest. I knew what kind of firepower I had in the fleet...but to see it in action was completely different, especially against an enemy fleet that wanted us dead.

"Yes, captain," Six voices responded as one over comms. Kara gently placed his hand on my left shoulder, drawing my attention to him.

"You can sit on the bridge," His smile was kind and understanding, motioning towards the captain's chair that was bolted in front of the sonar panel, "You don't need to stay standing the whole trip."

"I know I don't, Kara..." I looked back towards the

Scharnhorst

's bow, watching as the two ships in front slightly moved with the waves as they plowed forward, the

Tirpitz

moving in tandem with the battleship underneath my feet as they followed right behind, "For a first fight...that was pretty rough."

"No one sank while under your command, captain."

"But with

Hood

and her fleet on the other side of this ocean, I can't shake the feeling that one of you will."

"We are your ships," Kara's voice was strong and commanding, reminding me of my father, "Tools that are to be used as you see fit. Where you want to go is where we will sail and we will fight when you say to."

"Is this what you were like while with the Fog?" I raised an eyebrow, feeling my arms start to shake a little as the adrenaline slowly drained from my nerves.

"Oh, he was

way

more uptight than he is now," Todo laughed a little, "You should've seen him."

"Does it bother any of you that we may fight against your former fleet?" I looked towards the holographic screens. None of the men spoke up until Oso took a breath.

"We may be of the Fog, but we're still

your

fleet, captain. We have no other allegiances."

His words quieted a stressful thought that I didn't realize I had, a calm smile pulling at my lips before I looked at the horizon, seeing a thin line of blue underneath the gray cloud cover.

"All ahead full."

SweetVillain!Osomatsu x Civilian!Reader x Hero/LockedWard!Ichimatsu

>>===¤

1 Year Ago

¤====<<

"Do we

need

to go?" He groaned in discomfort as his fingers slowly buttoned up the pressed white shirt, his dark eyes shifting towards the young woman standing by the floor-length mirror, her hands fiddling with something near her ears. She was already dressed for the event tonight, a slim black dress that barely brushed against her knees settled over her form, adorned with sequins sparkling in her favorite color as they were scattered all over the piece of clothing. Black stockings clung to her upper thighs, drawing his eyes down to her feet that were ready for the kitten heels near the front door.

If he didn't have anywhere to be, he would've loved to show her how much he liked the outfit.

"We've had this reunion R.S.V.P.'d for the past six months, Ichimatsu," She glanced at him through the mirror, catching his eye before turning to face him, "It's our twentieth graduation reunion, goof. Don't you want to see how our old friends are doing?"

"The ones that I actually cared about are the ones I still talk to today," He huffed as he pulled the suit jacket from the hanger, carefully sliding it on

while ensuring that the shirt underneath remained in a comfortable position.

"I'm sure they'll be there, too," The young woman leaned in and lightly pressed her lips on his left cheek, "You look really nice, Ichi."

"You always look nice," His response was quiet, going unheard as she walked away.

"Ichimatsu, you made it!" A hand clapped down hard on his left shoulder, drawing a growl from his throat as he looked to see who had touched him. A wide smirk rested on the man's face, making Ichimatsu's eye twitch in recognition as he glared into a pair of dark eyes that smiled back at him.

"Axis Jeer," Ichimatsu shrugged the man's hand off of his shoulder, stepping away as he glanced around for the young woman that he came with, "I didn't realize that you were in our class."

"Surprise," Axis ran a hair through his gaudy pink hair, letting the bangs fall down on the left side of his face, "You'd be surprised to hear how many of our classmates became successful, including (y/n)."

Ichimatsu's eyes narrowed, "My fiance is successful enough, but you don't need to worry about her since your multi-billion yen company is more than enough to manage your attention."

"Oh, so you know about it?" Axis' lips stretched into a wider smile, taking a small clump of pink hair between his index finger and thumb, rolling the strands a bit before letting go, "I guess I'm more famous than I thought."

"Ichimatsu, who is this?" Ichimatsu glanced behind him to see the young woman from before walking up to him, two glasses of some kind of drink in her hands.

"(Y/n), this is Axis," He took one of the glasses from her hands, quickly putting a protective arm around her shoulders so she didn't walk closer to the man, "He was one of our classmates."

"Axis? Axis Jeer?" (Y/n) thought for a moment before letting in a short gasp, "I think I remember you! Oh, geez, you made time in your busy schedule to come to this small party?"

"Of course, I did," Axis laughed, holding out his hand for her to take, "It's not every day that the twentieth anniversary of our graduation comes around."

"I guess not," She laughed in response to his laughter, taking his hand and giving it a firm shake before he gripped it, bringing it up to his mouth and placing a chaste kiss on the back of her hand.

"Ichimatsu informs me that you're both engaged," Axis quickly released her hand, casting a quick glance towards the aforementioned man that was glowering at him, "I want to offer my congratulations on the matter."

"Oh, thank you, Axis," (Y/n) quickly tucked her hand behind her back, keeping the smile on her face as she looked towards Ichimatsu, "We're to be married in a year or so."

"That soon, huh?" He laughed a little, placing a hand behind his head, "Please tell me the wedding date when you have it all figured out. I'd love to attend and give you some gifts."

"Only if you're able," (Y/n) quickly countered before another woman tapped her on the upper arm, distracting her from the glaring contest the two men were having, "That time already? I'm sorry, you two. I need to get ready for the speech."

(Y/n) excused herself from Ichimatsu's arm, giving him a soft kiss on the cheek before melding into the crowd that was starting to gather in the hotel reception hall.

"Getting hitched already?" Axis grabbed a glass from a passing waiter's tray, swirling about the golden bubbly drink inside the glass flute before taking a delicate sip, "And here I thought that you'd stay single for the rest of your sad life."

"You think that I'd follow in your footsteps? Yeah, right," Ichimatsu eyed his own drink, the same golden hue reflecting part of his face back to him, "She needed help and we naturally fell for each other."

"Playing the hero, then," Axis hummed as he took another sip, quickly taking several steps to nearly press himself against Ichimatsu. He glared at the other man, the smirk swiftly turning to a scowl, "Don't kid yourself, Ichimatsu. (Y/n) was supposed to be mine."

"A trophy wife doesn't fit her personality," Ichimatsu didn't balk at the physical closeness, maintaining his glare, "She'd never be happy draped over your arm like some kind of show prize. You have enough trophy wives to spare, so find one of them to be more interested in."

Both men readied themselves for a fight before (y/n)'s voice called out for the crowd's attention over a speaker, distracting them.

"Good evening and welcome, everyone! Tonight, we celebrate the twentieth anniversary of our class graduation," (Y/n) stepped up onto a small stage that held some instruments that were ready to be played by the band members behind her, "I'll keep this short so we can enjoy our evening of merriment and fun!"

The crowd laughed, Ichimatsu taking a few steps away from Axis.

"There are a lot of faces here, so it's more than possible to find an old friend here. I just want to raise a toast first," She held up her own glass, the crowd mimicking her movement while Axis and Ichimatsu raised theirs in response, "To our continuing health and to many more reunions to come!"

"Cheers!" The crowd called out, laughter rolling in a few places before (y/n) stepped off of the stage, swarmed by a small crowd of fellow students that congratulated her on several accomplishments throughout her life.

"To your future marriage, Ichimatsu," Axis softly said, his tone just low enough for the other man to hear. Ichimatsu turned to look at Axis, the pink-haired multi-billionaire taking a sip of champagne before continuing, "And to your health. Stay strong for her, hero."

>>===¤

Today

¤====<<

I tapped my heel nervously against the tiled floor before standing up and pacing for the tenth time this hour. The nurse on station barely cast a glance, keeping her focus on whatever work she was doing on the computer while I figured out how to burn the nervous energy that had been building up this whole day.

"Mrs. Matsuno, you can take a seat," She called out, "We'll let you know when visiting hours start."

"I know, but...I've got too much energy," I commented before looking up at the clock, seeing that I still had five minutes left before visiting hours started, "Would a jog be too much?"

The nurse didn't respond, letting me think of an answer on my own as I sat back down on the chair bolted to the floor. It was one of many in a row, the neutral white walls of the hospital doing nothing to ease the tension in my mind.

This wasn't my first visit here, either, but it was the first time that I'd be able to take my husband outside in the hospital courtyard. Under heavy supervision, of course, but we'd have some time together that wasn't within these stifling walls.

My hands clenched together, my thumbs pressing into my bottom lip as I watched the minute hand slowly move towards the designated time, my eyes quickly shifting towards the double doors that led into the psychiatric ward.

My husband had been here for almost five months, his mental health rapidly degrading after our wedding. I had tried to help him as much as I could: getting referrals to different doctors, finding financial assistance through government programs, and eventually having to sell our house because the

mortgage was too high for either of us to pay after he lost his job. Ichimatsu was fine for the few months leading up to our wedding, but it seemed like something turned off in his head a week after the ceremony. He started to babble nonsense about things that I didn't understand, that someone was after me and wanted to kill him, this person that was from our past becoming a ghostly figure to his mind as Ichimatsu started having night terrors about being killed.

I closed my eyes as I let out a heavy sigh, thinking back to how Ichimatsu came to be here in the first place.

Axis Reel had visited shortly before Ichimatsu's manic episodes, apologizing for missing the wedding and giving us both a gift while I cooked us some dinner. Ichimatsu and Axis got into a heated argument about something, the topic going unheard by me. I didn't realize there was a fight happening until I heard Axis cry out in pain, finding him holding his head with fresh blood dripping down it and onto the wooden floor. Ichimatsu stood over him with wide eyes, the neck of a wine bottle that I had hoped to serve during dinner clutched tightly in his grip. The alcohol was dripping off of Axis's hair and shoulders, mixing with the blood.

"Mrs. Matsuno, we're ready for you now."

My thoughts were interrupted by a male nurse holding one of the doors open, instantly standing and following him through the white corridors until he opened a locked pair of doors. I had to keep myself from rushing to my husband, his figure resting in a wheelchair while a light blue hospital gown covered his body. Ichimatsu's dark eyes lifted to meet mine before they widened, the frown he had been wearing instantly turning into a large smile.

"(Y/n), you're here, just like they said you'd be."

"Yep, here I am," I crouched down and gave him a tight hug around his shoulders, feeling his arms return the gesture, "I'm sorry that I can't be here the entire time, Ichimatsu."

"No, it's all right," He pressed his cheek into mine before releasing me, allowing me to move to the back of his wheelchair, "Are we going

somewhere?"

"Yeah, we're going out to the courtyard," I started pushing him towards the garden area of the hospital, glancing behind me to see a nurse following a short ways back, "I thought that the sun would do you some good and the weather is absolutely perfect outside."

"(Y/n), you know that I don't really like the sun."

"I know, but sunlight has a lot of benefits. Plus, when we're out there, I was thinking of combing through your hair," I leaned over and briefly kissed his cheek, "Just like we used to."

"(Y/n)," Ichimatsu's hand caught the back of my head, keeping me leaning over as I pushed, "You know I don't belong here."

My breath caught in my throat, staring right into his dark hues. There wasn't any deranged expression in his eyes, looking at me with the same intensity as when he'd said his vows, "Ichimatsu, I--"

"I don't know what's going on, but I keep feeling weird things whenever they give me medicine," His eyes narrowed, "I think they're drugging me to keep me here."

"I don't think they'd do that to you," I nearly whispered, slowly stopping the wheelchair as his hand released my hair, "Ichimatsu, these people want to help you get better...not forcefully make you worse."

"You need to believe me, (y/n). They want to keep me here because they're about to do something," He partially turned around in his wheelchair to follow me with his eyes as I stood back up, "I need to get out."

He knew that what he was saying made him sound insane, but the sudden doubtful look in his wife's eyes was heartbreaking. He knew that he had become careless and fell right into Axis' trap months ago, knowing that the bastard had enough money and influence to keep him here.

Ichimatsu gritted his teeth, forcing himself to turn back and face forward in the wheelchair, his head foggy and sluggish after a small moment of clarity. The medical staff had been feeding him something that kept his mind from focusing on several things at a time, slowing his mental processes to a crawl...and all he could do was beg his wife to get him out.

He closed his eyes and went limp in the wheelchair, feeling it move once more before his skin started to warm up, knowing that they were traveling down the corridor full of glass that encircled the garden. Ichimatsu could see the same garden from his room, studied it often when he was able to think about it, and knew how to escape it with an able body.

He just needed to get out there before letting his other persona out.

Nekokage was his alternative identity, and he had already listened to the news reports about the missing hero. Many wondered if he had gone back to Tokyo to join up with the other team, but when the hero team withheld their response, theories started flying about Nekokage abandoning his post and leaving the country.

Ichimatsu

hated

it.

He just needed the moment to tell (y/n) the truth again when there wasn't someone watching.

I steered the chair next to an armless bench, parking it next to the end seat and sitting next to Ichimatsu as I felt the sun cascade down onto us, the sky a clear blue without a cloud in sight.

"This feels nice, Ichimatsu," I tried to start a conversation, pushing past the outburst that happened moments ago, "If you tilt your head up, it feels much better."

Glancing over at my husband with his head dipped low against his chest, my brow creased in worry as I tentatively reached over and brushed some hair away from his face.

"Ichimatsu...?"

"If it isn't Ichimatsu and (y/n)," I flinched at the loud voice calling out over the courtyard, quickly sitting up and looking around before locking eyes with a man wearing dark tinted sunglasses with thick white frames. I couldn't see what his eye color was through the tint, but I swore I should've recognized the smirk that pulled his lips wide. He took long strides towards us from a door, a large amount of fur covering his left shoulder and wrapping around his waist. The fur pelt looked more like a bear the closer he came, revealing a brightly colored Hindu-inspired outfit underneath.

"Do...we know you?" I recoiled as the oddly-dressed man stopped in front of me, his right hand reaching out and tracing the bottom of my jawline before I yanked my head away from him. His fingers each bore a brightly colored ring, his pinky wrapped with two different colored ones.

"I'd feel offended at the question, but you've never seen me after my rebranding," The man leaned in closer, his hands planting themselves on either side of my hips as he leaned close to me, "You get a free pass, my precious (y/n)."

"Get away from me!" I cried out as I slapped the man across the face with my dominant hand, his head turning sharply with the follow-through but his posture not even budging, "This place is supposed to be for hospital visitors and patients. If you're not seeing anyone, then kindly get the fuck away."

The man laughed a little as his head slowly turned back towards me, the thick sunglasses dropping a little down the bridge of his nose, "Oh, (y/n)...I didn't know you had

this

much fight in you."

He quickly closed his arms behind me, drawing me close and picking me up in the same motion before slinging me over his shoulder. I cried out in surprise, curling my hands into fists and hitting the pale red fur on his back as hard as I could.

"Well, it's been a fun little game, Ichimatsu," The man spoke to my husband as if he knew him, "But I win."

"Don't--" I heard my husband start before a grunt and loud clang was heard, barely able to peer over the intruder's shoulder to see what was happening.

Ichimatsu was sprawled out on the ground, his gown askew and a slipper off of his foot as the wheelchair skittered away from him.

I reached up and yanked hard on the man's pink hair, "You fiend! Leave my husband alone!"

"If you're willing to fight this hard for him, then I can't wait to see how hard you'll fight for me," The man didn't seem affected by what I did, looking back as his head turned to face me, "For now, though...nighty-night, my precious gumdrop."

Ichimatsu struggled to prop himself up on his forearms, his head heavy as he tried to lift it so he could focus on the man that had taken his wife from his side.

The man had his head turned towards (y/n), his hand on the back of her head and their lips locked together. A moment later, the man broke the connection and licked his lips in satisfaction, (y/n) coughing for a moment before falling limp over his shoulder.

"You know, I don't normally play long-con strategies...but this one was delicious to create," The pink-haired man laughed out loud, shifting (y/n) on his shoulder so she settled into a more preferred position. He let out a soft hum before looking down toward Ichimatsu, "Ah, I really fucked you up, didn't I?"

Ichimatsu's eyes went wide with recognition as the man lowered his shades, revealing the dark hues behind them, "Axis..."

"Ah, ah, ah~," He waggled an index finger in disapproval, "The other name."

"Mr. Simply," Ichimatsu growled as he managed to get a knee under him. Why the medical staff wasn't doing anything to stop what was going on was beyond him; his wife was about to be kidnapped in front of his eyes, and he couldn't do a damn thing to stop it in this state, "Let her go."

"Sorry, but won't," Mr. Simply spun a silver baseball bat in his free hand, bringing it out from its hiding spot underneath all the fur, "We even toasted to this happening, remember? I told you to stay strong for her, hero, but here you are..."

One end of the bat was wedged under Ichimatsu's chin, forcing him to look up higher.

"Barely able to stand on your own. Oh, it feels so good winning against you," Mr. Simply chuckled as he raised the bat into the air, holding it above his head, "Sayonara, Nekokage. May we meet again after (y/n) is my woman."

The baseball bat split open and a rotor folded out, quickly accelerating up to speed and pulling Mr. Simply up into the air with his human cargo, leaving Ichimatsu on the ground beneath him.

Ichimatsu growled as he struggled to his feet, glaring up until Mr. Simply wasn't anywhere in sight anymore.

"Ah, Mr. Matsuno, please," The voice of the nurse called out somewhere behind him, "You shouldn't be standing."

"You knew about this," He quickly turned on the nurse, seeing her right the wheelchair before pushing it over to him, "You saw it and did

nothing!

"

"Mr. Matsuno, you were seeing something that wasn't real," The nurse moved around the chair and tried to help him into it, "Your wife left nearly a half-hour ago and you've been sitting out here by yourself. Come on inside; it's almost dinnertime."

"No!" He pulled himself from her tight grip, stumbling a bit before regaining his footing. The fog in his head started to lift, becoming more and more certain that this place was meant as a trap to keep him here, "You're all a disgrace to the field you claim to be. My wife was just kidnapped, yet you're more worried about

me

eating some disgusting slop that barely resembles food because it's easier to drug!"

He could feel a cool shade cover the garden, a single cloud blocking out the sun.

"That's your last mistake with me," He flexed his fingers, clenching his hands into fists before sending a scalding glare at the nurse. She staggered back, raising a hand in front of her face for protection as his vision grew darker, the wind violently whipping around him as he felt the cool shadows swirl around his form.

Nekokage would hunt down one more villain.

I groggily opened my eyes, the darkness falling away to reveal a room covered in a dark red color. Slightly moving my head to the side, I met a pair of dark eyes that stared back at me.

Sucking in a shout of surprise, I scooted away from them, a soft laughter echoing in the room as the owner crawled onto their knees. The soft

material under my hands and butt made me realize that I was on someone's bed, the sheets incredibly thick to the touch.

"Sweetcakes, you're not going to get away that easily," The man from before let his tongue hang from his mouth before slowly licking his upper lip, "I've waited for

so long

just to have you here...I'm going to savor every moment and movement you make."

A flash of recognition passed in my eyes, the pink hair partially matching up to the only other person that had worn that color recently, "...Axis...?"

"Always right with your answers, aren't you, valedictorian?" His voice rolled into a satisfied moan as his left hand wrapped around my right ankle, dragging me close underneath him as the sheets pulled at my clothes, "Such a sweet voice you used for my name...say it again."

"No!" I cried out, fighting to lower my shirt from under my breasts while avoiding his other hand, "What the hell are you thinking?"

"I'm thinking that you're giving me exactly what I want," He ran his free hand through his hair, licking his upper lip again as he positioned himself over my legs to keep them pinned, "You see, it wasn't just your husband that had eyes for you during high school. I had tried to get you to notice me, but my plain looks just never attracted your attention for more than the reprimand you gave me."

I flinched as he continued crawling over me, his knees pressing down into the bed on either side of my hips, his hands spreading wide into the mattress just above my shoulders so I didn't have anywhere to run to. My heart beat faster when I realized that he wasn't wearing a shirt.

"So I changed," His eyes partially closed as he seemed to visually devour me, "Became something different and achieved a lot of things to attract your gaze. But almost twenty years have passed and I find you bound to

some guy that thinks he can keep you safe by hiding you away from the world...

hiding you away from me

. So I figured it was time to show you what you're missing, (y/n)."

Axis leaned a little closer, the tips of his hair brushing against my face.

"I can give you anything you desire in the world, you

know

I can. I've got money, power, fame...anything that anyone would die for, I have it in spades. But there's only one thing that I don't have," His breath danced on my lips, "

You.

"

"You

can't

have me, Axis," I fought past the blush as my body stilled against my wishes, my heart thudding heavily in my chest as the man slightly pulled away from me with a slightly unimpressed expression, "I'm a married woman and I'm not willing to leave my marriage for anyone."

"You mean the marriage that's falling apart in front of your eyes? The same one that has forced you to stop pursuing a higher career to take care of your mentally insane husband and caused you to live alone in a studio apartment as your savings dwindle away between rent and medical expenses?" Axis barely lifted an eyebrow, "I'd barely call that a marriage."

"It's still something that I want," I felt cold tears start to fall from my eyes, "Even if I become homeless to make sure that my husband recovers from

whatever ails him, I'll stand by his side and love him. That was my vow to him and I intend to keep it."

"When's the last time you slept with him?"

"I--what? That's none of your business," I glared up at him, giving him a threatening glare as much as I could from my current position.

"Clearly," Axis settled more onto my body, wedging his right hip between my legs before hooking his knee under mine and forcing it to spread wider, allowing his other leg to mimic the movement on the other side, "Then I'll stop playing nice, my little tart. I'm a man who knows what he wants and I

always

get what I want."

"You

can't

have me, Axis!" My hands pressed hard against his shoulders, trying to push him off of me, "I don't want to be with you-mrrphph!"

His lips pressed down on mine forcefully, muffling my protests as Axis lay his chest against mine, the kiss turning more into a fight as I tried to pull away by turning my head from him.

Finally managing to break away for a moment, I let loose a scream as I felt his mouth against my neck, kissing it harshly and sucking a bit of skin between his lips to leave an obvious hickey.

"I told you, (y/n), I always get what I want. You'll eventually come to me," He hummed happily as he ground his hips against me, his body

clearly

showing what his intentions were, "I'll send money to pay off those hospital bills and ensure that Ichimatsu gets a nice enough place to stay where he

can live out his life without you."

"You bastard..." I pushed my hands hard against him, Axis sitting up against my waist with a happy sneer as his hands pinned my thighs against his upper legs, "You bastard,

that

was your plan the whole time?! You ruined Ichimatsu's life to get to me?!"

"Knew you earned that valedictorian spot at graduation," He gave a playful wink, "Smart cookie is what you are, so you should also know what happens next in the plan I have. Now that I've got you under me, what's the next step?"

"You getting the

fuck

away from my wife."

Before Axis could turn around, a dark shadow leapt from some corner of the room and forced him off of me, freeing my legs in the process. I scrambled off of the bed and retreated into a far corner, turning to see Axis fighting off a dark figure.

Light purple fur lined the person's back, flaring up at their shoulders and ending near their waist under a gold belt. A long feline tail whipped out behind them like a black cord, ending in a sharp double-edged blade that was lined with gold, while three long gold claws jutted out from both of their hands.

"Nekokage!" Axis laughed in surprise, holding onto one of the gold claws in each hand as he remained underneath the person, "Did you forget to take your medicine?"

"Never again," The familiar dark voice of my husband echoed out from the shadowy figure, "You'll never again mess with me or my family."

"Sorry, but no can do," The billionaire smirked, despite the strain on his face, "You see, there's nowhere that you or your cupcake can go that I won't be able to follow. Give it up, Nekokage. I win!"

I found myself standing over the two men, both of their hands occupied while I held a hefty landline phone that I had pulled from a bedside table. I raised it over my head and brought the heavy thing crashing down on Axis' head, a solid 'clunk' sounding out before he went limp under the person called Nekokage.

I refused to touch the phone again, backing up as realization hit me that I may have killed Axis with my own hands. My back hit a wall and I slid down it, staring at my hands before a dark pair of gloves covered them, gripping my fingers tightly.

Looking up with shaking eyes, I saw the familiar gaze of Ichimatsu's dark color from over the facial mask that he wore, creating a mock feline muzzle before it collapsed around his neck to fully expose his face.

"Ichimatsu...did I--?"

"No, he's still alive," Ichimatsu's voice was quiet compared to the rage it held only moments ago, "You didn't kill him."

"What...what will we do? What about him?" Questions flooded my mind before my husband leaned in close, wrapping his arms around my shoulders as his lips gently pressed into my right cheek.

"First, we get away from here. I can carry you down this skyscraper safely," He swiftly picked me up and allowed me to get a comfortable grip around his neck. The muzzle covered his face once more, "After that, we'll move back to Tokyo. I have a few friends there that can help us hide in exchange for my assistance."

He moved towards the broken window that was hidden behind heavy black-out curtains, revealing a beautiful skyline. I felt him take a deep breath before kissing his cheek quickly.

"Before we jump, I have a question."

"Can it wait?" He barely asked before I shook my head, "...what."

"When were you going to tell me about this?"

"...at some point."

I couldn't give a retort before Nekokage, my superhero husband Ichimatsu, jumped out of the broken window and fell towards the street dozens of floors below.

Brothers and Male!Reader

Requested by SleepySeth.

(For those curious about the song Karamatsu is singing, it is linked at the end of the story.)

"Let's see..." I hummed to myself as I went through the checklist of things that I wanted to complete for the day, most of the items already marked off, "'Gather mail from the inbox' and 'discover a new part of town', huh? Well, the mail thing won't happen until it's been delivered later on, so I guess I'll head out."

Folding the list back up and slipping it into my back jeans pocket, I shrugged on my favorite outerwear and locked the apartment door behind me as I left. Taking in a deep breath before picking a random direction, I put my hands into my pockets as I walked into unfamiliar territory within Tokyo.

I had been living here for a few years, but never really strayed out of the areas around my home and work, fearing that I'd get lost and wind up in some nasty neighborhood.

Shaking my head with a frown, I dismissed the idea from my mind.

"...

is what I like the best...

"

A voice caught my attention, the sound of someone singing softly coming from my left. I looked over to see a side street that I may not have noticed without the singing, my curiosity peaking as I took the new route.

"

I can't hold it, I can't reach it / I can't hold it, that heart of yours.

"

A strong guitar strummed before the voice picked up a little in volume, the passion clearly heard as the singer continued.

"

'It's just my own thinking' / I want to cry when I feel this way / Our feelings can't become the same,

" Some vocalizations followed before the guitar sounded some stronger chords, my attention pulled up to the roof of someone's house as the side street ended just next to it.

Curiosity pushed me forward to find a man about my age sitting on the edge of the sloped roof, a guitar held gently in his hands as he played the chords out for an audience he didn't pay attention to. The dark sunglasses blocked his eyes from me, but he didn't shirk away when I stood still in front of his house, the leather jacket cracking a little as his left arm moved up and down the neck of the guitar, the notes growing softer as he opened his mouth.

"

Are you ready? I still want to look / Are you ready? At that heart,

" A few extra strums picked up the pace as he dove back into the chorus of the song, "

I can't tell you how I feel / The more I want, the more it hurts / Even so, I could never hate you / 'It's just my own thinking' / I want to cry when I feel this way / I want to know how you feel.

"

The guitar picked up volume as I felt the passion radiate off of the man, taking in the emotions that he was clearly feeling while singing the song.

"

I can't tell how you feel / Even so, I could never hate you...summer draws near...

"

With the last few words, the guitar completely faded out as his right hand pulled away from the strings.

A sharp clap pierced the silence that followed, shocking myself and the man at the same time. My hands stung as they continued clapping, finding myself at a loss for words at his performance.

The man, however, cried out in shock as he fell from the roof onto the street below.

"Ah, shit! You good, man?" I rushed over when my mind made the connection that

I

had sent him tumbling to the ground. The man grunted on his back as he held the guitar aloft, keeping it from hitting the ground underneath him.

"...Yeah...I'll be all right," He sat up with some assistance, my hand reaching out to his own with a firm grip, "You just startled me is all."

"I didn't really mean to," Closing my eyes as I offered him a bow of apology, I heard his free hand brush off the dust that had settled on the leather jacket, "I was just walking around and heard someone singing, so I just followed the sound until I saw you."

"Are you new to the area?" The man's free hand ran through the dark hair on his head, the sunlight catching tints of blue as it moved, "It's a little surprising that this is your first performance of mine when I've been doing this almost every day."

"I don't live close by. Just wanted to take a stroll around places I haven't been yet," Standing back up from the bow, I took a closer look at the man.

The sunglasses he wore completely hid his eyes from view, but the confident smile he had didn't betray much other than that. The leather jacket appeared to be well-worn, the creaking coming from the sleeves that looked to be newer than the body of the jacket itself. He wore light blue jeans that clung a little too tightly to his legs for my taste, the waistband holding down the bottom of a light gray shirt that he wore underneath the jacket.

"Ah, then you are to be considered new here!" In a swift motion, he pulled the sunglasses off of his face to reveal a dark pair of eyes, their intense gaze holding my own colored hues in rapture, "My name is Karamatsu Matsuno, the second oldest sextuplet that lives in this house."

Sextup--

"You'll meet my brothers soon since they're due to be back from pachinko shortly," He continued as if this was normal for him, which may be the case, "And your name?"

"Ah, it's (y/n)...(y/n) Hamada. I'm just a regular guy that likes to mind my own business," I partially narrowed my eyes at the pointed comment, hoping that he was wise enough to pick it up without prompting. I had just wanted to explore a new section of the city, not meet new people.

"Well met, (y/n)!" Karamatsu clapped a hand down on my right shoulder, his fingers gripping it tightly in a brief squeeze, "Since you listened to my little performance, tell me what you thought about it. Anything that you think I could improve on?"

"Well, I'm really not

that

familiar with playing guitar or singing...but it was okay, I guess."

"Really? Nothing that would need improvement?"

Your social cues...

"Not that I could tell," I shook my head while keeping my mouth shut on my actual opinion. There wasn't a large chance that I'd see this guy again after today, but I didn't want to deflate his ego more than it already had with the fall off the roof.

"That's odd. My brothers always say that my playing is painful, or that it sounds like a dying cat..." His words made me wince a little, the grimace quickly falling from my face as he seemed to look past my shoulder before a wide smile, "

Brothers

, welcome home!"

The jump to a different language threw me off before glancing behind me, seeing three others walking towards the house. Just like Karamatsu had said, they looked nearly identical to him in many ways, except that there were a few smaller details that my eyes picked up on to help differentiate between the four of them.

One of the brothers was wearing a red hoodie, his hands tucked into the front pocket as he jabbed an elbow into one of the others by his side, motioning with his head toward me. The man that was jabbed glared at the one in red before looking over towards Karamatsu and myself, the glare shifting onto me as his lips closed into a tight frown while his shoulders lifted the purple jacket collar a little higher to cover his neck. The third brother walked on the other side of the one wearing the red hoodie, sporting his own yellow color by way of a baseball uniform with a bat slung over his shoulder. The unending smile on his face began to unnerve me as the glare from the other brother grew in intensity.

"Who's this?" The one in red spoke up first, letting his hands fall out of the pouch as he came closer.

"This is (y/n) Hamada, a neighbor that's wandering around the area," Karamatsu stood next to me, heavily draping an arm across my shoulders so

that I couldn't run away, "He's new to town."

"I'm not really

new

--"

"Newcomer, huh?" The red-clothed brother stopped when he was about a meter away from me, a smirk pulling on the corners of his lips, "I'm Osomatsu Matsuno. You've probably heard of me."

I hadn't

.

"This is Ichimatsu and this is Jyushimatsu," He pointed to the man wearing the purple jacket before switching to the one wearing a baseball uniform, "Got a girlfriend?"

"No," My answer was quick, one of my eyebrows lifting at the odd question, "You're not gonna lord over me because you have one, are you?"

"Nah, we're all virgins here," Osomatsu closed his eyes and laughed like it was the funniest joke in the world, drawing a groan from Ichimatsu and a hearty chuckle from Karamatsu. Jyushimatsu remained strangely quiet, the wide smile still present on his mouth. Osomatsu clapped a hand over my uncovered shoulder, the second eldest moving his arm away before it could be hit, "So, how long have you lived in Akatsuka Ward?"

"I

don't

live in the ward," My voice grew tense as I shoved off Osomatsu's hand and took a step away from the brothers, growing more and more uncomfortable around them by the second, "I was just walking by, saw Karamatsu fall off the roof of your house, and would like to go back to my wandering."

"You fell again?" Ichimatsu sent a curious glance towards Karamatsu, who nervously slid the sunglasses back into place.

"I was just playing and (y/n) sent me falling out of shock."

The brothers all looked back at me, and my heart rate skyrocketed. It was a miracle that the guy wasn't injured from the fall, but that may not have mattered to his brothers.

I

was the one that caused it to happen in the first place.

"Let me guess," Osomatsu took a step towards me and I instantly shifted back, "You hated his music and wanted it to stop."

Harshly gulping past the sudden lump in my throat, I took another few steps away from the advancing brother to back into something soft. Sparing a quick glance, I only saw the glare from before meeting my eyes and wondering how the hell Ichimatsu got behind me so quickly.

"No...no, I listened to the entire song! I thought he sounded great and waited until it was over to clap, and that's what sent him falling," My head practically whipped back and forth between Osomatsu and Ichimatsu, unsure of how they'd react to what really happened.

The news seemed to give Osomatsu pause before looking back to Karamatsu, his focus slowly shifting to me as the smile fell a little.

"You...liked it?"

"Yeah, I did!" I blubbered like an idiot, fearing that I was about to be ambushed by four strangers. It wouldn't have been a fight, even if I could keep up a guard for most of it, "Karamatsu is a really good singer, so I wanted to be respectful."

"Damn..." Osomatsu lifted a hand up to his chin, his dark hues locking onto my own, "If you tolerated my brother's screeching that he tries to pass off as 'singing', then you're not a bad guy, (y/n)."

"You're...not mad that I could've hurt him...?" The sudden turn in attitude truly confused me, momentarily forgetting about the pissed off brother behind me.

"A fall like that wouldn't hurt him," The red-garbed brother laughed, walking back to Karamatsu and setting a hand on his left shoulder before moving past into the house, "Come on in, (y/n). I'll introduce you to the rest of the family."

"No, I think I should--"

"Just give us a few minutes," Karamatsu's voice was quiet as the others stepped into the house, including Ichimatsu. There was a soft pleading tone that I could hear, as if he didn't want to see me leave so soon, "My brothers are head-strong, but I know that they mean well."

I lowered my gaze to my feet, knowing that I really didn't have any other plans for the day and I'd more than likely be bored at home. What was the harm in potentially making a few friends that lived nearby?

"Five minutes...and then I'll be on my way," I tried to sound confident in my answer, but the warm smile that Karamatsu gave me held something else that told me he knew I'd change my mind.

I ended up staying with the six Matsunos for the rest of the day...and kept going back whenever I didn't have work.

https://youtu.be/Fq3IhWqYVAY

Hotaru

by Fujita Maiko, the ending theme song of otome video game, 'Hiiro no Kakera'.

Naga!Brothers and Pregnant!Reader

This is a partial continuation of 'Subject to Study'. Enjoy.

I was alone when the pain started, staggering forward and catching myself on the lip of the rocky door before I could completely fall down. Letting out a hissed groan, I rested my forehead against the cool stone surface before exhaling the rest of my breath, "Okay...

that

was a contraction."

Standing back up took some effort, my swollen belly making things more difficult than even before as I slowly waddled over to the reinforced bed of leaves. While I had slowly lost weight due to the severe diet change, my abdomen was riddled with dark veins and stretch marks that betrayed how quickly my skin had to adjust to the pregnancy. It had been a gamble every time I lay with one of the nagas, but after the past two years of fleeing America, I thought it was impossible.

If I was honest, I would've rather have the normal human gestation period of nine months and not the snake's range of three to six months...

Gently laying on my back while slowly adjusting my position, I focused on my breathing as the pain slowly ebbed only to come crashing back with each inhale. I didn't bother counting how much time passed since the first wave of pain; there was no human doctor here to time everything out.

"The others are clearing out the agreed spot," Choro softly explained as his shadow cut off the sunlight flowing through the open doorway, his cold hands quickly pressing against my forehead and left shoulder, "What do you need me to do?"

"I don't know," I shuddered through another contraction, feeling the weight in my womb suddenly shift and pull in different directions, "...I don't know...!"

"Shh, it's okay," His lips were a welcome distraction on my cheek, pressing against a fresh tear trail, "I brought some fresh water from the spring and some old fabrics to use as rags if you can't drink from the bowl."

I could only nod as he moved closer into the carved out room, shifting some of his tail under my head and shoulders as support while Choro carefully pressed the cool stone bowl to my lips. The water was still cold from the closest spring, a welcome comfort as my body's temperature raged.

"Then it's time?!" Jyushi excitedly pushed into the crowded room, pinching Choro's tail harshly between the rock opening and his own tail. The mamba naga painfully hissed a warning that went ignored by the reticulated brother, the sudden noise barely startling me.

"You're the

last

one that needs to be here," Choro snipped, his teeth flashing in the low light to expose the gaps where the fangs remained folded.

"I have just as much right as you," The younger growled, a guttural hiss piercing through each word as Jyushi appeared to tighten up into a strike. The movement drew another hiss from Choro as his tail was nearly crushed against the doorway where Jyushi positioned himself.

"...stop..." My throat was tight, reaching out and holding Choro's hand, "...is everything ready?"

The green mamba naga closed his mouth from the hiss, his dark green eyes flicking back to me while his fingers curled around mine, "...yeah. Would you like to try to walk there?"

I shook my head, "It took everything in me to just lay down."

"

I

will carry her," Jyushi interrupted as Choro opened his mouth to speak, drawing another glare from the older brother, "You're not

strong

enough."

Neither naga spoke as Choro begrudgingly moved out of the carved room on the outlook, Jyushi quickly moved in as soon as space opened up and gingerly picked me up in his arms as another contraction tightened my cervix, drawing a cry of pain from me.

"Kara stated that they just finished clearing out the area for you," The items that Choro brought were back in his hands, moving to stay close to me as I was carried down the mountainside, "The others...will be on standby for the delivery."

"Do you know what they'll be like?" Jyushi's question drew my attention for the moment, "Any that look like me?"

"I don't know," I tried to smile apologetically, "We won't know who the father is until they're out..."

"Todo asks if you want him to be next to you," The mamba naga acted as a telephone between the brothers, relaying the scent messages.

"Yes, I do."

"I bet they'll all be mine."

"Regardless of who they share similarities with, you shouldn't aggravate their mother and our mate," A new hiss warned as the mountainside gave way to a light scattering of towering trees, the canopies covering the small group while they traveled deeper into the jungle nestled in the middle of the island. Teal scales stood out brilliantly against the light green foliage of the

bushes beginning to thicken along the ground, the scarred flesh of Kara forever bearing the marks of the surprise attack from Jyushi, "You've ensured to be gentle?"

"I'm always gentle with her," The reticulated naga huffed, rearing back a little as a small purr rumbled in his chest while cautiously watching the blue insularis naga climb down his chosen perch.

Without a word from Kara or Choro, both of them lead Jyushi further into the thickening jungle as I clasped my hands around my distended midriff. The pain was becoming too much, feeling one...four...seven different things

shift

inside my stretched womb, each of the naga babies seemingly fighting to reach my cervix first.

It had always been a point of contention if the children would be venomous or not, each brother stating that they'd care for them in my stead due to babies having little to no control over their muscles. If I was bitten, it would surely be a death sentence.

The three brothers flinched before a searing pain ripped through my waist, drawing a scream of agony while I tried to writhe in Jyushi's arms.

Kara turned back towards me, his cool hands stroking the sides of my neck before moving down to my shoulders, "Hush, my flower..."

I found myself laying down in flattened long grass, the course blades covered by animal furs and old fabrics that I no longer had use for. A cold swatch of cloth was draped over my forehead, cool water trickling down behind my ears and into my hair while someone leaned over me, their amber eyes catching the light of the sunrise from within the scaly black and yellow mask covering their upper face.

"You're always such a dramatic thing..."

The pain only lessened somewhat as Todo leaned a little further down, his position indicating that I was leaning against his coiled tail while I could barely see Choro and Jyushi past his pink-speckled hair, "Don't...you

dare

start that fight now."

"Oh, I won't," His eyes narrowed playfully, "Not when I get this view all to myself. Your pale cheeks flush with both embarrassment and pain; sweat beading along your brow while you gasp for breath on top of my coils...reminds me of our last coupling."

A mix of a laugh and a groan escaped my throat, not minding my legs being maneuvered into position, "You would be the one to bring that up in this moment. Last I checked, I--"

Another contraction ripped through my body, starting within my waist before spreading to my back and legs, leaving me breathless and clinging to Todo's hands like a lifeline.

"You're going to be okay," Todo whispered my name as he drew closer, the deathgrip I had on his hands not even phasing him while his lips brushed against my forehead for a moment in a chaste kiss, "Our family is here for you."

His words were meant to comfort, to use his ability to try and keep me calm throughout the entire delivery...but the

squirming

I felt within me completely overrode anything that he was trying to do.

"K...Kara...Oso," I desperately looked into Todo's eyes, willing myself more than ever to fall under his spell faster as I barely heard the two nagas move a little closer, "Don't let...our children bite me."

"Never," Kara's soft-spoken voice remained tender while I heard Oso's familiar laugh, knowing to take that as a promise.

Contraction after contraction wracked my body, each one growing worse as time dragged on. I was given water when I was thirsty, attempting to eat some of the medicinal paste that should've helped with numbing the painful waves but I couldn't keep anything solid down for more than a moment before my stomach rejected it.

The sun lifted higher in the sky as the thick canopy protected me from its full exposure, only allowing some thin strands of sunlight filtering down to the ground.

The scent of blood suddenly filled the air as I screamed with the longest contraction yet, the nagas tensing up with their faces twisted into various masks of rage, sadness, and concern.

I pushed hard, feeling something slimy rushing out between my legs. Todo blocked my view as Oso reached down without saying a word, "You're doing great...That's one out."

"...but is it alive...?"

He didn't react to the question before another baby was pushed out, drawing a cry from me as I clutched his hands.

Oso kept quiet as he handed the squirming green baby naga to Choro, the latter barely reacting as it suddenly extended its fangs and bit hard on his forearm, muffling the small hisses. The oldest brother left the green mamba naga to tend to his own child, pushing through the thick scent of blood and decay as he took the second baby that found its way out, seeing the bright teal colors through the bloody slime coating its body. Kara took the newborn and carefully began cleaning it while tolerating the frenzied bites from the infant, drawing away from the group for the moment to give Oso the space he needed to help deliver.

"Of course, it's alive," Todo answered her question after she was able to breathe, "As are the others that have come out. Here, have some more water..."

'Nasty biters

,' Choro's scent barely pushed through, '

We should keep distance until they can control the biting tendencies

.'

Kara's message was only agreement, '

They should stay with us

.'

'She won't like that

,' The oldest barely smirked before another scream tore his attention back to her, '

We'll need to find more food. More space

.'

Two wriggling naga infants fought each other as they breached, tangled in each other's coils before taking their first breaths and hissing as soon as they took in oxygen. The yellow and white scales were dulled by the reddish slime, Oso letting out a quiet exasperated sigh as Jyushi rushed over to see what the commotion was about.

"Twins! Mine are twins!" The newly-appointed father lifted them both up -- the newborns still fighting with each other -- and held them above his head with laughter. One of the twins was almost all-white with smaller patches of yellow scales that seemed centered around their shoulders and waist, while the other was a perfect copy of their father, "Look at them! They're beautiful!"

Oso barely saw your hand lift up and briefly touch Jyushi's chest before another baby wormed its way out, his focus switching back to his appointed job. Your belly had severely deflated from its full state, but the movement under the skin told him that you still had some children left.

The current newborn cautiously reached out to Oso's hand, its tiny fingers curling around his thumb as he pushed the slime off the lavender-colored scales before lifting it up into his arms.

'Leave them

,' Ichi's warning came quickly as the guarded father took the baby from his arms, quietly crooning over his child while the corner of Oso's mouth turned upwards in a knowing smirk.

"Almost done," The words Todo spoke were meant to offer hope to you, but Oso's first heart sank lower into his stomach as he watched two more baby nagas fight each other while they were pushed through the birth canal.

Bright yellow mottled with pink scales, both colors displayed brilliantly against the black scales.

Todo also had twins, but with the father busy distracting you from the lessening pain, Oso was left to clean up the two and bring them over to Ichi. While the younger of the two only offered a glare of disdain, he gathered the twins in his arms and began taking care of them, cleaning off the afterbirth and providing their first meal until Todo could leave your side.

"Can you...Do you know how many there were?" The oldest hid his disappointment well, beginning to clean away the afterbirth that followed each baby out. The furs and rags would have to be burned -- the blood soaking deep into the hairs and fibers -- but the grass underneath would recover after a few good rainstorms.

"I...think I felt seven," You sounded tired and weary, groaning a little as Todo wiped off the sweat from your brow, "How many are out?"

Oso's dual-colored hues lowered, smothering the anger and rage at the unfairness of the situation, "Seven...but you still need to be cleaned up. Stay there."

"Oh," The word was a relieved sigh, "I won't be going anywhere for a bit..."

'

Then--

'

'

Shut it. No one tells her,

' Oso's message was full of hate and anger, causing the others to flinch back in shock, '

Focus on your own

.'

'

You're our brother,

' Kara's scent was a small relief after the invisible lashing, '

If you truly want a child, we can refrain from laying with her.

'

'

And put her through this again? Not a chance

.'

'You

were the one wanting a child more than any of us,

' Choro glanced at the group from over his shoulder, still unflinching from his kid's fangs still buried deep in his forearm but carrying a look of

concern as his dark green eyes focused on the krait naga.

Oso gritted his teeth and shot a glare back, his lips pulled back into a snarl but withholding a hiss, '

If it was to happen, it would have. These have always been the rules that we've followed.

'

'

That was

before

we were stolen.

'

The green mamba and red-headed krait nagas continued their staring contest before Oso let out a sharp huff, looking back at you as your scent became more relaxed.

'

She doesn't need this at the moment

.' "Is there anything that human doctors do after the delivery?" He lifted himself up a little more after collecting the bloody flesh, offering a small smile.

"Never had a child before, so I don't really know...maybe get rid of the placenta if it doesn't come out on its own?"

"And how do they do that?"

The furious blush was the answer he needed, her scent offering confusion and embarrassment.

'

Distract her

.'

Todo barely nodded before focusing his full attention back at her, his ability capturing her attention and forcing her body to relax as Oso began to fully clean their mate.

Injured!OC and Brothers

I've been stuck in a writer's block for the past three weeks, and this idea struck me while I was in my therapy session. It's short but very relevant, as I have been pulled from work due to an ankle injury and have been lax on self-care. I am recovering mentally, but it is slow so I'm taking small victories every day.

"So tell me how it's been going so far?" I asked the phone, quietly adjusting on my couch while withholding a groan from the pain that shot up from my left ankle, "You guys...uh...life treating you well?"

"As well as we let it," The familiar laugh sounded from the call, joined by a few other faint voices, "We just finished filming season three of the show, so it's only a few crossovers with other franchises and some radio voicework for now. How about you, Cee?"

My eyes settled on the ice pack wrapped around the injured ankle, "Business as usual."

"Work treating you well?" Another voice asked, sounding chipper and eternally happy.

"Like I said, busi--"

"Don't say 'business as usual', Cee," A dark voice warned, cutting me off from the automatic reply, "Osomatsu didn't say anything, but we all heard it when we answered the call. You hurt yourself again; you always prop up your phone on the side table on speakerphone to free up your hands, or to let your feet be more elevated on the couch arm."

"Ichi--" I shut my eyes tight as the brother's name left my lips in a sigh.

"No. Stop," The audio from the phone call became a little muddled as yelling could be heard from the other brothers. Ichimatsu's voice rang out clear as he turned off their speakerphone setting, "We've known you for

almost ten years now. You're a dear friend of ours and we've picked up some of your little tics."

"What's the injury?"

"How long have you been hurt?"

"Do you need anything done at home?"

"Are your pets fed?"

"Are there prescriptions you need to pick up?"

The questions flooded the call as I covered my mouth with a free hand, choking back tears of mixed relief and fear.

"It's only an hour drive from our place to yours," Osomatsu called out in the background, "Stay where you are, and we'll help take care of you."

"But your work--"

"Fuck it," I heard Choromatsu's voice yell.

"No, please!" I reached for my phone and switched it off speakerphone, "Don't put me above your own needs."

"And let you suffer alone?"

"I'm not suffering," It was hard to believe the lie.

"Cee, I can hear you crying. When was the last time you had a

restful

sleep? The last time you showered?" Osomatsu had taken control of the phone, some commotion in the background, "We asked you for one thing during our last visit, right?"

"...to take care of myself."

"And what aren't you doing right now?" Karamatsu's silky voice chided as he took the phone.

"...taking care of myself..." I closed my eyes as my lips pulled into a pout, my ankle throbbing past the ice as I barely shifted position.

"We'll bring food, medicine, and more hugs than you can handle, Cee."

"...I'll see you in an hour..."

Proclamations of helpfulness, friendly interactions, and care struggled to jump into the call before one of the sextuplets ended the call. I let the phone fall onto my chest as I lowered my right arm over my eyes, sucking in a deep breath between chattering teeth.

I had always struggled with feeling helpless when I was injured, and this one threatened to keep me out of work for the next few weeks. It would be a challenge, but I'd learn to lean on others just like they could lean on me.

One step at a time.

SuperPower!Brothers and Sister!Reader

Flashes of fire and lightning collided as I quietly sipped the freshly made green mint tea, focusing on the novel in my free hand while partially ignoring the sibling brawl behind me. My eye twitched in annoyance as I stretched out my arm fully, an arc of lightning zipping between the book and my head before it was safely collected by the custom designed lightning rods installed in each corner of the room.

"Would you stop it?" Choromatsu called out, a gentle wind filling the room as my third-oldest brother stepped into the makeshift arena, "Go fight in the actual practice room. You're gonna burn the place down."

"...or ruin my books again," I threw in, the words quiet but the tone intentionally aggravated.

"We weren't gonna get

that

carried away," The older sextuplet complained, his voice whining like a petulant child denied a wish, "Jyushimatsu and I were gonna keep it calm."

Both Choromatsu and I huffed as our index fingers raised to the fully charged storage battery near the door, the very same one that was kept empty to catch any stray lightning from our hyperactive brother.

"Ahah hah! Too much energy, I guess!" The aforementioned brother laughed with a hearty guffaw, his extra-long sleeves shaking loose to cover his hands once more.

"If you get carried away with your abilities, you're gonna hurt someone...or worse," I rested a finger on the page I was on, closing the novel and looking

at the two brawlers, "When are you gonna listen to what we're trying to say?"

"Pfft," Osomatsu scoffed lightly as he tucked his hands into his jacket pockets, swiftly jerking his head up to slide the darkened safety shades off of his eyes, "Choromatsu and Karamatsu have abilities that can hardly hurt anyone. It's not my fault that I've got fire."

"We're lucky that I can mediate the damage you cause," The second-eldest brother stepped into the room and conversation, adjusting his slim black gloves while shooting a warning look at the eldest, "Just listen to our sister's warning."

Osomatsu let out a groan, rolling his eyes at the comment before trudging towards the doorway, "Okay, okay...We'll go."

"Why do you stay in here when they start acting up?" Choromatsu crossed his legs as he sat down at the table next to me, reaching over and peeling a mandarin orange while keeping his gaze on the previous occupants, "You know you don't have anything to protect yourself...you nor Ichimatsu."

"You should know that I was here first, trying to read in the silence of our empty house before Osomatsu and Jyushimatsu came back from what sounded like a heated gambling run," I opened my book again, flipping to the saved page, "Besides...it would be more dangerous to try and move out of the room when they were going all out. I was a part of the scenery as far as they were concerned."

Choromatsu hummed quietly in acknowledgement, "I understand, but..."

I flinched as I felt the back of his index finger brush against the fresh scar on the left side of my neck, partially hidden by the gray sweatshirt hood I always kept up. Slamming the book shut, I backed away from his reach and stood up, "Stop treating me like damaged goods, Choromatsu. I'm not that weak."

"You think that our parents scraped and scrounged for this equipment to flatter us?" He motioned to the installed lightning rods, draining storage

battery, and the flame retardant fabric hanging around the room -- the same equipment that was installed throughout the entire house, "We

all

got scared when these powers started manifesting and, with both you and Ichimatsu not showing any signs of gaining abilities of your own, we wanted to make sure that everyone was safe in this family."

"I

know

that," I glared at him, my gaze barely softening at the large paper fan clipped to his right upper arm, the paper carrying his signature green color, "...I know. I just hate it when you guys coddle me like a baby."

"You

are

a baby," Choromatsu stuck his tongue out, "Dad's overprotective of you because you're the only Matsuno daughter. Don't fault him for that. You know Todomatsu would absolutely milk that position if he had it."

The thought of Todomatsu begging and manipulating our parents to get him 'gifts' brought a small smile to my lips, "Are you sure he doesn't do that now?"

"Who knows with him," Choromatsu laughed a little before the sound of the front door sliding closed caught our attention, "Oh, that's probably Ichimatsu. Todomatsu has a late shift at work and it's still a little early for Dad to get home."

"Mom's on that grocery run, too," I clenched my fists as I moved towards one of the sliding doors of the common room, "I'll...go see how he's doing."

Choromatsu gave a hum of approval, "Just avoid the practice room, okay?"

I only waved a hand of dismissal at him as I walked out, catching a fleeting glimpse of a white-socked foot ascending the steps leading towards the room that my six brothers shared. A glance of the front doorway revealed the pair of purple shoes. There was only one brother that wore that color consistently.

Halfway up the stairs, I heard their bedroom door close.

"Ichimatsu?" I hesitantly knocked on the closed door, gnawing on my bottom lip nervously. My fourth brother had become closed off recently -- more closed off than usual -- and barely spoke to anyone in the past three weeks, only coming home to eat, sleep, and change clothes, "May I...come in?"

It had become an unspoken rule between us siblings to never enter each other's room without permission -- something about Osomatsu catching Choromatsu in a compromising position.

My heart began to race in fear as I could feel something change behind the door, like there was a predator getting ready to pounce and devour me if I even opened the barrier a centimeter. The house seemed to creak and groan as I picked up noises that I never paid attention to before, the brothers' bedroom now appearing as a portal into damnation if I disturbed whatever was inside.

My fingers flinched away from the partition as it suddenly opened a few centimeters, my eyes catching a cautious gaze from Ichimatsu's dark hues, "...it's just me."

"Fine," With finality, the door fully opened to reveal the bedroom in its daytime configuration. Ichimatsu clambered onto the small sofa, pulling his knees up to his chin and sitting 'comfortably'.

"Pardon the intrusion," I ducked my head in thanks, closing the door behind me as I took a seat on the opposite wall, pressing my back against the closet, "Sorry if I was interrupting something, but I wanted to get away from the drama downstairs."

"...I don't care," Ichimatsu huffed as he buried his head into his crossed arms, his feet angling enough to push his toes together, "It's not like you've got anywhere else to go."

I lowered my gaze at the comment, withholding the retort of being treated like baggage. In a way, what he said was true. I was sleeping in our parents' room, my own room left abandoned after Osomatsu gained his abilities.

My hand itched to rub the scar on my neck.

"I was...hoping to talk with you, actually. You know, have a relatively calm chat between two 'normies' in this family."

The atmosphere in the room immediately shifted.

"...'normies', huh?"

"Did...did you gain abilities?" I tried to pick up what was off about this whole encounter. The last time we had spoken, we could chat about what cats Ichimatsu had fed recently, or the different books I finished that day or week.

"...you're a freak," Ichimatsu spat out my name like it was poisonous to him. I could barely breathe as my eyes snapped to his position on the couch, meeting his dark gaze, "Maybe there's a reason that it's only us

brothers

that were born with these powers...maybe you were an accident."

"Wha--where is this coming from?" A heavy weight settled on my shoulders as my vision began to blur, darkness creeping in on the edges of my sight, "...Ichimatsu...?"

"You've never thought it odd that you were born with a weakened immune system while we thrive in any condition we're put into?" I could barely see the fourth sextuplet stand up, his eyes piercing down at me through the growing darkness with a purple glow, "There's a reason that you don't go outside very often, isn't there?"

All I could hear were footsteps, a gentle pad of socked feet walking towards me on the carpet.

"We took everything from you," Ichimatsu's tone was bordering on maniacal, taking every ounce of joy he could from what I never spoke of, "You are worthless to this family. Frail in health, weak in constitution, and a freak in this society."

"...stop..."

"I can see it," My name was barely a whisper on his lips, "You don't want to be alone, to be discarded like the trash you see yourself as..."

"Ichimatsu, stop..." I reached out with both hands into the darkness, hoping to catch his jacket but ultimately falling forward onto my hands and knees, "...I'm scared..."

My body trembled with fear, my eyes constantly searching for something -- anything -- in this vast darkness that seemed to stretch on forever, transforming the welcoming sight of my brothers' room into a nightmarish flat landscape of black.

"Freak."

Jyushimatsu let out a yell as he released the remaining pent-up electricity that had been building throughout the day, venting it into one of the storage batteries the family had bought until he was spent.

"Better?" Osomatsu's joints cracked as he clenched his fists, flicking out his left thumb and bringing it up to the cigarette hanging between his lips as a small flame flickered to life from the lighter hidden in his hand.

"Yeah..." The younger smiled widely, pulling his hands off the battery, "That lightning storm really did a number on me!"

"Just don't ambush me at our front door next time. It's not worth getting yelled at by Karamatsu..."

"I should go apologize to her," Jyushimatsu's smile fell a little, "I didn't realize she was there until Choromatsu came home."

"Why do you think I was trying to get you to face the opposite wall?" Osomatsu took in a long drag, the smoke slowly escaping on his breath, "She should be back in the common room with another book. It's been a while since we left."

"Okay! I'll go apologize," Jyushimatsu nodded vigorously and bounded out of the thin door of the practice room, crossing the small backyard and jumping through the open door to the common room.

Your name was shouted into the room, the novel you had been reading still laying on the table with Choromatsu rifling through another book about self-help work advice. The third sextuplet barely flinched at the entrance.

"Oh? She's not here?"

"She went upstairs a little while ago," Choromatsu spoke before looking up at the clock, "Oh...three hours, actually. Should be in Mom and Dad's room, then."

"Okay!" Jyushimatsu's smile returned in full force, making his way up the stairway and feverishly knocking on their parents' bedroom door while calling out your name.

Silence.

Maybe you were asleep? You always had anxiety when Osomatsu showed off his ability to create and control fire, so you were probably resting to calm down.

...

couldn't hurt to look anyways

.

Jyushimatsu cautiously opened the door, casting his eyes over the double futon your parents used -- Mom taking her usual nap before making dinner -- before turning his attention towards the single futon still rolled up in the corner.

You hadn't been in here to rest...so where were you?

Closing the door quietly, he brought his hand up to his mouth.

You hated going outside on your own -- something about your anxiety causing you undue stress whenever you were around certain places -- and Jyushimatsu didn't hear Choromatsu say anything about you going to the library close by to trade in the books you rented.

Maybe the brothers' bedroom?

Jyushimatsu opened the door wide with a smile on his face before he saw Ichimatsu's panicked behavior, the older brother fretting over a limp form spread out on the loveseat. The jean hems showed enough of your favorite socks to tell him who it was.

"Big brother Ichimatsu?"

His name startled him from his fretting long enough to register who had said it, Ichimatsu backing away from you and raising his wide gaze to Jyushimatsu.

The dark hues were a bright purple, the sclera swallowed by black instead of the usual white.

"J-Jyushimatsu...she's not breathing...!"

"...what...?" The youngest brother froze at the spoken words, his gaze shifting between Ichimatsu and you.

Your lips were partially opened like you had been about to scream, your eyes staring at the ceiling. Sweat beaded everywhere on your skin as if you were having a nightmare, remaining still when he gently touched your right cheek.

"I don't know what happened!" Ichimatsu's voice was near a shout now, his panic overriding the usual quiet, standoffish behavior he loved to emote, "She just came in to talk...and then she stopped moving!"

"...what did you do?" Jyushimatsu whirled to his brother, holding back fury as he locked eyes with the odd-colored ones of Ichimatsu...the very same color yours now were, "What did you do to her?!"

"I don't know!" He shouted back, the sound of approaching footsteps nearly drowned out by the screaming match, "I don't know what to do!"

"What the hell's going on here?" Osomatsu stepped through the doorway, "What are you shouting...for..."

Flames erupted from Osomatsu's body, his wide gaze fixated on your form as the furious fire died down to embers that licked at the red jacket and jeans wrapped around his legs.

"Big brother Osomatsu," Ichimatsu cowered away from the clear display of anger, tears starting to fall from his eyes as the eldest brother slowly looked from you to him.

"You're the one that did this, so you'll be the one to undo it."

"I don't know what I did!"

"Was there anything that you guys were talking about before?"

Jyushimatsu turned back to you, summoning the miniscule amount of electricity in his veins before hovering his hand over your chest. There was a faint pulsation from within your ribcage, subtle and weak, "...I think you're killing her, Ichimatsu."

"Freak."

The word repeated itself ad nauseum, drilling itself into my mind as I frantically ran through the darkness. Nothing made sense; everything made

no sense. This emptiness was terrifying to me, Ichimatsu's voice chanting the one word as I screamed out for him to stop, falling to my knees and trying to escape this nightmare by tightening into a ball while my hands clamped over my ears.

The tightness in my chest never eased, tears freely flowing down my face as I cried out for relief.

I...was the freak...right? My sextuplet brothers were blessed with powers and our parents doted on them more...than they did me. My heart never fully formed, living past the age of expectancy and only housed with my family because of the medications I took every day to ensure that my cells had enough chemicals to continue repairing the tissue my body was constantly damaging.

It was harder to breathe.

Slowly, my body lost its tension and stretched out in the darkness, the tears never stopping.

"Freak."

Yes...I was.

My brothers were the only thing keeping me from staying in the hospital permanently -- Jyushimatsu with his electricity, Osomatsu with fire, Karamatsu with water, Choromatsu with air, and Todomatsu with sound; all things needed to keep my body functioning 'normally'...electricity generated for stimuli, the fire for external heat when my body grew cold, the water needed for organ functionality, the air to give me breath, and the sound to ensure everything was working.

I couldn't live on my own unless I had a death wish.

There were many times where I wanted to die, but the thought of making my family sad kept me from taking a walk into the city for the day.

...so I remained at home, tethered to the library that was close by to borrow books and visions by authors, desperate to have a dream where I could take the place of the main character.

"Freak."

I know I am...

Osomatsu had playfully called me that back when I had my own bedroom, his body nearly vibrating with excitement about something that happened to him. When I tried to tell him to leave, he grew impatient and demanded my attention. Fire exploded from his right hand as he reached out to grab my left shoulder, the greedy force searing my flesh before the room became an inferno.

I was forced to sleep in our parents' bedroom after that, our father becoming fearful for my life. He was the one in charge of keeping me away from my brothers, but close enough for them to become useful...no, it was because he wanted to spend my last moments with me.

My brothers were innocent in this...

I was the problem.

I couldn't move my chest anymore, my eyes closing against the darkness as I succumbed to my exhaustion.

"Freak."

"...I know..."

Ichimatsu swallowed thickly, sandwiched between Choromatsu and Jyushimatsu as they knelt on the ground next to the sofa. He could feel the anger resonating in the room, but pushed past it to focus on what to do.

"You said that you were talking to her," Osomatsu spoke carefully from behind the three, his words more pointed towards Ichimatsu as the other

two carefully worked to steady your heart, "I need you to recall what you've said to her. Your ability manifested because of -- or due to -- whatever was mentioned, so start there."

His purple eyes flicked around the room before settling on your form, his gaze dropping to watch the rhythmic rise and fall of your chest as Choromatsu pumped fresh air into your lungs, "...I called her a freak after she called me a 'normie'."

The embers around Osomatsu's jacket barely flared up.

"But I heard a voice...it sounded like hers. It said that she was scared of the term," Ichimatsu looked down at the ground, "I just...wanted to hear that voice again. So, I just thought of something that would make her feel like a freak."

"Then start there," The eldest clenched his teeth for a moment, "I don't know how you're going to do it, but you need to deconstruct what you've built in her mind...if you even know."

Shame coursed through Ichimatsu's veins, flushing his skin red before he closed his eyes.

He knew why you hated that word, why you tried to help him feel special despite not having any abilities like the others.

Something tugged on the edge of Ichimatsu's mind, drawing his focus as he saw a thin wisp-like thread floating through the air before connecting to your head. The other end of the thread curled up in his left hand. His gut warned him to not cut the thread, not unless he wanted you to be trapped in your own mind until you died.

His mouth set into a neutral line, gently closing his left hand over the wispy thread and urging whatever it was to retreat back into his hand. When nothing happened, his right hand reached out and gently grasped the thread in midair.

Urging for his newfound powers to not run amok, Ichimatsu cautiously brought his right hand closer to him, watching intently as the thread connecting to your head began to pull out from your skin.

There was some talk happening around him, pushing past the distraction and watching carefully as your body began to convulse. The color was beginning to return to your eyes, though, and that was all the encouragement Ichimatsu needed to continue.

The last of the wisp-like thread fell from your head, gently wafting on the air before Ichimatsu clenched his fist tightly. The entire length vanished in a soft puff of smoke.

"Bravo," Osomatsu slowly clapped his hands, "Everything still good?"

"There's nothing else we can really do," Karamatsu gave a sigh, "Breathing is stable, heart is regulated, Totty couldn't hear anything wrong, and I've given enough hydration to ensure that her medications are carried to the correct organs."

"Then..." The fourth brother spoke up quietly, "...we can only wait for her to wake up?"

"Sounds like it, so stay here and work on your apology," The eldest barely raised his right hand in a wave as he left the bedroom, "We'll distract Mom and Dad until then."

The other four brothers left Ichimatsu and you alone in the room, your body now comfortably laying on the short sofa with a light blanket draped over your form to regulate your body temperature. Ichimatsu let out a sigh as he lay on the floor, adjusting his position to face you.

"An apology, huh...?" He closed his eyes briefly as he sucked in a deep breath, "It only makes sense...First Osomatsu with his, and then me?"

My eyes opened first, the lids slowly pulling themselves up to reveal the long-familiar ceiling of my brothers' bedroom. It was close to nighttime, which meant that dinner was about to be served.

A weight over my form caught my attention as I began to sit up, feeling a brush of cool air against my face as I breathed it in.

Choromatsu

.

I cautiously panned around the room before my gaze settled on a figure sitting in the middle of the floor, their purple jacket making it obvious who it was, "...Ichimatsu."

The fear from before flooded back, my hands clenching the blanket closer as I pressed my back into the sofa.

"...yeah, I know," His tone sounded defeated, not moving an inch from where he was prostrating himself, "I don't need to see you to feel that."

"...Why didn't you stop...?" Every nerve in my body was screaming for me to run away from him, but I forced myself to stay. It's not like I'd get very far if I did flee...

"I didn't know how to."

"Then..."

"I was so scared about what I had done to you," My name was quiet on his lips, "I knew what happened between Osomatsu and you, promising myself that if I did manifest powers that I wouldn't let the same thing happen...but it did. Your fear of...

that

word was tangible for me to use and I lost control."

'

That

' word...

"Freak."

He barely nodded, "I promise that I will stay away from you henceforth. You don't even have to accept my apology...Just listen for the moment and I'll be out of your sight."

Something in me warned that he could make that happen, for me to completely miss his presence in an empty room.

"I'm sorry that I forced you into such a scary situation, that I trapped your mind within your own fears," He pressed his forehead further onto the ground, "I will gain more control of my abilities...but I don't think I can face you until then. I failed you as an older brother...I'm sorry."

In the blink of an eye, he completely disappeared from my sight, vanishing into midair.

I sucked in a surprised gasp, nearly dropping the blanket in shock before I noticed the slight tinge of black along my field of vision. Dropping my gaze to my trembling hands, I heard the soft padding of feet move towards the door.

"...before you leave, Ichimatsu," I closed my eyes, imagining him turning his head to face me, "I am scared of what you can do, but that doesn't mean I hate you because of it...I accept your apology on the condition that you let me know that you're still around, even if you don't show yourself to me."

Silence filled the room before I barely heard his defeated sigh coming from the empty doorway. I opened my eyes to see a piece of torn paper flutter down to the floor, the door closing behind him as he left.

Taking my time moving off the sofa, I picked up the paper to see the hand-drawn image of a black cat head, its big eyes staring at me with a large curled smile. The scrawled 'nyah' down the edge had a small heart drawn underneath the last letter.

I pressed the drawing close to my chest, "...it's a good start, Ichimatsu."

Drider!Brothers and Reader

Inspired by alysaj615's prompt.

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WARNING: I have included spider pictures as references for the driders at the bottom

of this one-shot. If you do not like/tolerate the sight of different spider species, do not continue past the major dotted line.==========

"No..." I coughed in the darkness, blinking harshly from the sudden change of lighting as I felt dust settle on and around me, "No...! Help!"

I scrambled to press the power button on my headlamp, the beam flickering to light and sweeping towards the now-collapsed entrance that I had used, dust and rubble still settling from the sudden quake. What once had been the ceiling was now sealing me inside the intricate cave system, my foolish impulse to research more into a molt sample leaving me completely separated from those I had been employed with.

"Guys, can you hear me?!" Panic began to set in as I choked on decades-old dust and ash, my eyes straining to see anything within the dim beam of light, "...guys..."

I could feel the walls press in on all sides, my mind screaming at me that they inched closer while my fingers dug at the collapse site, sinking my fingers into the powdery silt and scooping out handfuls that kicked up into a bigger cloud. My eyes teared up at the sudden accumulation, inhaling the silt unexpectedly and sent into a coughing fit that wracked my body with pain.

I couldn't do anything. I lost my way out.

This place was new; recently discovered. No one knew how deep this cave system went.

How many people died in caves yearly? How many were explorers that were

ready

for this kind of situation?

What if there was some creature ready to devour my guts? The molt came from something, and I had found it here. Large creature; large spider.

My thoughts devolved into chaos, panic fueling my legs as I suddenly took off deeper into the tunnel. There must be an exit somewhere else, right?

A left, curving right, steep left climb, heavy silk. Stuck. Web?

Spider!

I struggled against the webbing, expecting it to snap readily since I was much larger than any prey it should be eating.

My shoulder twisted as I attempted to pull my left arm off of the web, straining before my muscles twitched and sent my limb snapping back into the neutral position that it was in when I ran into the web. I whimpered, tugging harder as I braced my feet on the ground; the web stuck to my skin felt like super glue as I partially gave up on freeing myself with brute force. The strength of the web was too strong for me to break without any tools.

Looking around the area, the headlamp illuminated what would've been a tranquil scene had I not been stuck: green moss grew all around the floor and walls, the tunnel opening up into a rather large cavern that had some ambient light from the moss.

What froze my blood was the drawn out creaking noise.

Something had moved, possibly the owner of the web that I was now stuck in.

Hesitantly, I glanced upwards while keeping my head completely still.

A thin leg stepped to my left, another to my right. A spider was crawling down its web to see what it had caught...but the size of it was too big. Just the first segment of leg was the length of my entire leg.

My mind snapped to the fantastical monsters of huge spiders, losing my focus on keeping my head still and swinging the headlamp upwards.

A humanoid face glared down at me, its eyes all focused on me. Two main ones that were larger than the other six where human eyes would be, surrounded above, around, and beneath by the other three pairs -- almost half the size and pure yellow in color. The nose was smaller than a human's, yet still sloped like one. A pair of lips seemingly split in four different directions at the corners, the dark lines spreading further back towards the bottom of their cheekbones.

Gray skin was stretched taut over its skeletal structure, yellow and black hair framing the monstrous face. I could see six more legs besides the two next to me holding the massive body above my position, repeating the black and yellow pattern until the legs joined to the abdomen in a darker yellow.

I screamed instantly, the headlight finally dying and something pressing down hard over my mouth while I felt more legs press near my wriggling form.

"Hush...they'll kill you if you scream like that."

The voice stilled my panic for a moment before I failed to recognize who had spoken, searing pain flashing up my arms and legs while I felt myself forcibly moved into a different position. Disoriented from the blind movement, I quieted down for a few seconds before letting out a terrified screech into whatever was covering my mouth when a human hand began pawing at my clothing.

"Oh...you're (y/n)! I've seen you wandering our cave for the last few days," The same voice spoke with less urgency. They almost seemed...excited?

I kicked out with my legs, my boots colliding with mossy rock and sending a throbbing sting up my leg as I moaned in pain.

"Don't do that," The voice came from in front of me, "You'll hurt yourself pretty badly...and bleeding here would be a bad thing."

I felt my feet touch solid ground, ensuring that I wasn't going to slip if the thing let me go. More creaking notified that the creature was moving from above me to in front of me.

"I'm going to release your mouth. You need to be quiet, or I can't keep you safe," As they spoke, my lips were freed from their tense prison, "I know you're scared, (y/n), but you need to trust me while you're in here..."

"...what are you?" I could see a soft outline of something dark in front of the bioluminescent moss, the shape making a monster of limbs in my head.

"I'm me!" Two of its smaller limbs gestured out to either side of it, "But I'm guessing that you're really asking a different kind of question..."

There was a pregnant pause before it spoke again, "If I show you what I look like, you have to promise that you won't scream. My brothers are really hungry..."

"I...don't know if I can promise that," I tried to step away, only to bump into two spindly pegs that were crossed behind me.

"You can't run, either! One wrong turn and you could end up as someone's lunch."

"I'm dead if I scream, I'm dead if I flee...not leaving me any choice, are you?"

"I'm the only one that can keep you safe."

"Fine," I let out a frustrated sigh, crossing my arms over my chest, "Since I'm at your mercy, I'll do what you say."

The crossed legs behind me urged me forward, once again forced to keep pace as the thing seemingly walked backwards towards the bioluminescent moss. Their breathing hitched for a moment before the glow of the moss grew in intensity, lighting up the entire area.

I could see the thing in front of me more clearly as their eyes cast their gaze downwards, as if it was worried I'd get scared by staring at all eight eyes.

The green light did little to offset the yellow color I had seen earlier, but it fully revealed its form where my directional flashlight could not.

Half-humanoid, half-spider.

Drider

.

"D...do you have a name?" I swallowed thickly as I fought to keep the fear from my voice, "It's not completely fair that you know mine."

"Jyushi," The drider's lips pulled back into a crooked smile of sorts, unable to fully imitate the emotion with its split mouth, "That's what I named myself."

"Jyushi, then..." I visually drank in as much information as I could about 'Jyushi', my mind identifying its features as that of a Joro spider. It was so similar that I couldn't help but wonder if it was a mutant, but quickly dismissed the notion from what little knowledge I had of mutations. A spider simply couldn't jump to this size in a handful of generations.

"I've watched you and your other kind outside our home," It took a half-step towards me, the legs behind me never moving from their blocking position, "What are you so curious about?"

"My kind..." My eyes widened in remembrance, "Actually...could we go to where you saw us? I need to...check something."

"Is that what the loud rumbling was for? A test that you're running?" The drider sounded excited as it lowered its humanoid half closer to me, my eyes catching all eight on its face, "What kind of test was it? Why haven't you done it before?"

"...it wasn't a test of mine, actually. The ground around the entrance must've grown unstable and fell on top of itself, so now I'm stuck here until I can get back out,"

Surely this drider knows of another exit...right?

"You...need to get back out?" Its face fell from excited to pensive, "I don't think that's a good idea...you could get hurt trying to leave. I can keep you safe, warm, fed, and watered here. Stay with me."

"I can't, Jyushi," Hesitantly, I reached up to the drider's face, pushing past the fear of seeing it expose its mouth in retaliation. Surprisingly, it let me lay my hand on its left cheek, my thumb resting on the split by its upper lip, "I need to get back to my team."

It pressed one of its humanoid hands over mine, the chill of its skin catching me off-guard as my skin cascaded in goosebumps.

"...I'll bring you."

Jyushi had allowed me to ride on his back, ensuring that I hadn't fallen off by gently tapping either of my legs with his hands while talking about his family -- the very same that I was warned to be careful of.

I couldn't catch all of the details but there were six brothers in total, each of them claiming some part of this cave system as their own.

The older two were more aggressive than the rest, while the middle two were smaller than the others. Jyushi had stated that the youngest was blind but ferocious in temperament, nearly rivaling the older pair. He had only

sung praises about himself and a brother called 'Ichi', stating that -- despite his fierce appearance -- Ichi wouldn't harm me.

Part of me wondered if he was glossing over his own facts to make himself appear better than the rest.

"This is where it was," Jyushi lowered himself to the ground, stretching out his two frontmost walking legs to allow easy dismounting, "Careful."

I had tugged the hem of my shirt over my nose and mouth as we entered the area, dust still settling in the absence of airflow. Cautious to not step on any flexible joint, I found myself standing between his second and third walking legs, moving out of the way and heading towards the now-collapsed entrance.

"I don't think I'm strong enough to help out...I was made for spinning webs, not burrowing or--" Jyushi cut himself off, "Oh! Maybe Oso or Kara could help! They are strong enough to carve out their tunnels...but you can't be around when they're here."

"You've told me."

"And I meant it!"

"What did you mean, Jyushi?" A third voice cut through the conversation, drawing Jyushi's focus instantly towards one of the tunnels further down while I had to strain my eyes to see in the near-darkness, "Talking to yourself again?"

"...or talking to your guest." I withheld a scream as a disembodied hand brushed against the back of my neck, spinning around and slamming my back into Jyushi's carapace. I felt him instantly shift to take the blow, two of his walking legs crossing over the other in front of me.

"Ichi," Jyushi spoke cautiously, not moving from his new position.

The fourth voice uttered a hum, a skittering noise sounding in front of me that swept towards my left. I followed the noise with my ears as accurately

as I could, turning around to face where the third voice had come from, "You have a bad habit of entertaining food."

"(Y/n)'s not food," Jyushi's voice became stern, "You can't eat her."

"Oh, I'm not worried about us," They spoke again, near-silent footsteps padding closer as the surrounding dimness revealed a harsh dark outline, "I was talking about you eating her. I already know that you're the greedy one with food, gaining their trust with sweet-talk and kind actions to only ensnare them in your web and drain them. It's how you've always hunted."

The sudden silence from Jyushi was telling.

"...Jyushi...?" My throat felt dry, flinching a little as I felt his body press close to mine, his humanoid hands clasping mine and lifting upwards until I was seated on his back once more.

"I will keep you safe, (y/n)."

A sudden rush of wind blasted against my chest and face before I reached for Jyushi's back, grabbing ahold of some longer hairs along his spine to keep my balance. With a twist of motion, I felt myself turn upside down while Jyushi maneuvered freely in the cramped, dark area. Words were exchanged between the three brothers, words that I didn't care to hear, before I felt Jyushi bring his legs close to his body and squeeze through some kind of tunnel that wasn't meant for him.

I blinked at the sudden flood of light, screwing my eyes shut.

"Here..." I felt myself lifted up and placed back on the ground, cautiously opening my eyes to see a dug out area that held water. The light streamed in from a tiny opening high above, small shadows repeatedly blocking it in a nearly monotonous rhythm, "I know it's not my little cave, but I couldn't bring you back there when Todo and Ichi were so close."

Jyushi stepped out into my field of view, the sunlight washing his colors anew; the yellows were vibrant, nearly neon, while the blacks and grays on his exoskeleton and skin were more pronounced against the bright color. He

looked towards me with a thoughtful expression, his lips turning upwards into an awkward smile when he realized I was looking at him, "Something I can help with?"

"Oh, no...I can see you more clearly in this light," I dropped my gaze as his lips began to peel back to reveal the jet black fangs I hadn't wished to see, "How can you be sure that Ichi and Todo won't follow us here?"

"Todo cannot see and prefers to stay close to his nest," Jyushi moved towards the water, settling his carapace and abdomen on the ground completely while folding his four rear walking legs behind him and dipping the four front legs into the water, "Ichi...doesn't like water. He'd rather drink the water that collects from the ceiling than be here."

"So...Ichi was the one you said wouldn't hurt me, right?"

His eyes lowered further towards the water, his humanoid arms crossing over his chest.

"...you're not really planning on eating me, are you?"

Jyushi recoiled from me like I had hit him physically, standing up instantly and rearing up defensively, "Never! You're (y/n)! You're the only one that hasn't tried to draw me or my brothers out of our nests, and you seem to be the nicest human of the herd!"

"...but I wound up in your web, and you've been nothing but kind to me since you realized it was me," I didn't move any closer to the rearing drider, letting him have his space.

Jyushi lowered his stance into a more neutral one -- with all of his legs on the ground -- as a thoughtful look rested on his face, "I...really don't have intention on eating you, (y/n)...what do humans do to show a friendly gesture?"

I was taken aback by the sudden turn of question, "Uhh...giving a gift, sometimes?"

"Then I'll get you another gift!" He twisted around me, his passing only marked by a slight breeze on my skin as he disappeared into a dark tunnel somewhere near the ceiling, "I'll be right back--!"

I could only stand where I was left before a humored chuckle played with my lips, moving towards the water and kneeling next to it. A quick glance at my wristwatch showed that it had only been two hours since I set out from camp, a mere thirty minutes since the cave entrance collapse.

I could only hope that the rest of my team could put two-and-two together.

Cupping my hands and tentatively bringing them down to the water, I scooped up some and brought it up to my lips, gingerly tasting the water before swallowing what I had. It tasted clean, much cleaner than what was being recycled at camp.

Better wash off the dust while I can

.

Fully sitting down, I began to wash off my forearms of the dirt and dust that had settled on my skin from the collapse, methodically washing off what I could without removing any clothes from my arms and legs before kneeling down to rinse my face and hair.

"Enjoying yourself, intruder?" A new voice spoke above me, my hands quickly brushing away the remaining water near my eyes as I moved away from the waterline.

The blue-colored hairs were easily seen in the light, each of the four legs I could see absolutely covered in the color with more walking legs coming into view as the creature positioned itself between the water pool and I. The visible legs were much thicker than Jyushi's, albeit a little shorter. The humanoid torso had two arms crossed over it while the expression worn on the head was a brazen show of disapproval, its eight eyes focused entirely on me.

"I...was told to wait here by Jyushi, and only wanted to clean--" I flinched back when the creature moved closer to me, each of its paws sounding a muffled 'thump' in each step.

"How much more will you taint our home?" Its two foremost legs suddenly struck out, knocking me down to the ground as it positioned its massive body into an aggressive stance, "Your kind has never been welcome here and yet you continue to prod into our home, ignoring our warnings and stealing bits of our dens when we are absent."

"It's not our intention to steal your homes!" I cried out in fear, holding my damp arms in front of my face as a meager attempt to form a barrier between myself and the new drider, "We weren't aware of your presence and assumed that the bits of webbing had been created by some new species of spider."

The blue drider hissed at the observation, moving forward and pinning my left leg underneath one of his clawed paws, the sharp curved talon barely resting against my skin, "You humans think you own everything you see...I won't let you think that way any more. You will be the example for the rest of them."

I recoiled with a yelp as another walking leg stepped on my right shoulder, shoving it down and pinning it to the ground, "No...please don't! If you let me leave, I won't let anyone into the cave system ever again!"

"The words of a liar."

"Back off, Kara!" The familiar shout of Jyushi sounded before the blue tarantula drider was shoved away from my prone position, its claws dragging across my skin as Jyushi took up a defensive stance over me, "She's mine!"

"You're harboring an enemy, little Jyushi," Kara calmly stated as he gave Jyushi some space, some of his eyes never leaving my form, "Devour her now before she finds a way to let her kind know where we are."

"She's stuck in here with us. She can't leave."

"Then eat her quickly so they don't find her."

"I'm not going to eat her!" Jyushi yelled at Kara, the older drider only shaking his head in disappointment at the declaration, "(Y/n)'s been nice to me, so I'm going to be her friend."

"

They

have tried many times to smoke us out of our home," Kara pointed an accusatory finger at me, "Why does this one deserve different treatment?"

"Because

I like her

! I watched her from inside the tunnels for the past moon and I liked watching her become excited when she found something of ours, so I kept throwing out discarded molts in hopes that she'd become brave enough to wander in!"

I stilled at the confession, my breathing becoming a little shaky as I realized that the partial molts I found were

planted

...by Jyushi.

"You intentionally endangered our family?" Kara scoffed, "All for this human?"

"Don't lie, Jyushi," A third voice echoed through the water chamber, something reddish flashing in the light from the ceiling before a heavy 'thud' reverberated along the ground and walls, "You were the one to set up that collapse. You locked the human in with us because of some delusional thought stuck in your head."

Kara stepped aside as another drider, his body just as large as Kara's, stepped into view.

The short ruffled hair on the humanoid head was similar to Jyushi's and Kara's, some facial features bearing the same resemblance as the other driders, but the neutral expression he had sent chills down my spine. Each step he took was methodical, maneuvering in the space easily like it was his den. The reddish hairs covering the spider body weren't as extravagant as Kara's, the abdomen appearing much larger than Jyushi's and Kara's. This drider and Kara definitely shared characteristics of some species of tarantula, but the exact names escaped me.

"N-no, I didn't," Jyushi's defense died on his lips, his tone shaking a little, "I had...nothing to do with what happened."

"Nothing to do with the webbing that was attached to the larger rocks in the ceiling, the very same webbing that could be withdrawn by strands leading into

your

den?"

"N-not at all, Oso," Jyushi slowly backed away from Oso as the newly revealed drider came closer, exposing me more to his sight, "It wasn't me."

"Is that so? My molt didn't disappear a few suns ago, only to reappear with the third paw missing? Kara's molt didn't just walk away for it to return with the second segment missing?" Oso's eyes fell down to me, "Not even...the webbing that had been found barricading the tunnel's entrance to our own dens with strands thick enough where we couldn't break through it without warning you?"

Jyushi remained silent, his body completely withdrawing into the darker parts of the cave as an expression of shame fell on his face.

"What's so special about you, human, to have turned my brother against us."

"I...don't know," My throat felt dry despite drinking fresh water only minutes ago, "I had found the missing pieces of your molts...brought them back to study for my own personal curiosity, and left my camp without warning my teammates of where I'd be."

I stayed still as Oso leaned down over me, his forelegs adjusting to the new position, and met his gaze as steadily as I could.

"The fact of the matter is still the same: you're stuck in a place where we don't want you. I don't know what you need to survive and I don't care to know. I'm not taking care of you," He stood back up to his full height, barely glancing over at Kara before settling his gaze on Jyushi, "Since Jyushi wanted you to be his, you're now his problem until the humans come claim you. If I hear that you're causing issues, I won't hesitate to end you myself."

Jyushi gasped with excitement, quickly grabbing my shoulders and lifting me up from the ground onto his back, "Oso, you won't hear anything! She won't cause any problems."

Oso only looked over his shoulder for a second before turning towards Kara, Jyushi sprinting down another tunnel before any other words could be exchanged.

"Oh, this is exciting!" Jyushi's hand pressed against my cheek, holding me close as he ducked down into some hole that I couldn't see, "If there's anything that you need, let me know and I'll go get it for you. I can't wait to take care of you and make you comfortable!"

"Jyushi, hold on--"

"And then there's food! What kind of bugs do you prefer to eat?"

"Jyu--"

"Since you had some water earlier, you probably don't need to drink for the next few suns, right?"

"Jyushi!" I shouted as loud as I could, the drider happily looking back towards me as he slowed down, "Were you really the one that triggered that tunnel collapse?"

The smile only widened, "Don't you worry your pretty little head about that. I get to take care of you now! The humans will never find you down here, so there's no chance that you'll be taken from me!"

His words stilled my heart, my mind only able to focus on breathing for a moment or two.

Jyushi had placed me down on the ground at some point, his hands deftly stroking some moss over my exposed skin while he continued to talk.

I had been curious about what spider the molt had come from, but it never occurred to me that the

spider

would be more curious about me. I was essentially captured...for testing. I had become a holotype for the drider.

"No...I don't want this...!" I pulled my head away from the moss clump pressing against my cheek, finding myself partially wrapped in webbing and stumbling over my legs as I frantically fought to free myself from whatever Jyushi had done in my mental absence, "I don't want to be trapped down here, and I don't want to be eaten!"

"No one's going to eat you, (y/n)," Jyushi followed me closely, his walking legs trying to guide me back to where I was before, "I'll be the one to take care of you, and I've already promised to not eat you. I'm going to keep you safe from the ones that

will

eat you, so just stay with me."

"I want to go back to my camp, Jyushi!" I finally tore through the webbing on my legs, wincing at the slight pain before trying to gain some distance

from Jyushi, "You've kidnapped me for your own personal want!"

"But...you accepted my gifts! I gave you my brothers' molts and you took them with you!" He whined as he tried to corral me, "I saw you take them back!"

"I didn't know they were gifts, Jyushi!" I pressed my back against a wall, my hands frantically patting the wall behind me and feeling a sizable crack wide enough to fit me and not the drider, "What you're doing isn't okay!"

"Of course it is! You're now mine to take care of forever!" His tone became panicked, his hands grabbing my shoulders as he tried to bring me close to his body, "Mine, and only mine!"

"No!" I shouted, shoving my hands against his shoulders hard and breaking free from his loose grip while using the force to wedge myself into the crack. He cried out in both surprise and worry, his hands and walking legs attempting to widen the crack as I continued to follow its broken path deeper into the wall. The dirt was loose, some tumbling down onto my head and shoulders as I continued further from the frantic drider.

I never signed up for this when I registered for the expedition. I was only here to study new species, and an overly-attached, extremely-possessive drider was more than I could handle.

A small crack of light filtered through some of the falling dirt, my hope to reach the outside lifting as I squirmed my way through the tight fit. The area just beyond the rift was new to me, the sunlight barely streaming into view as I released as much breath as I could and wiggle through the last few feet of hardened earth. Momentum sent me staggering forward a few feet before I could gather myself, straightening up and looking back towards the slim crack where I had escaped Jyushi's grasp.

I couldn't hear anything from the Joro drider, taking the calm moment to catch my breath and take in my new surroundings.

The cave was similar to the one with the water pool, the packed dirt ceiling much higher than the previous area. Moss spread around the small stream of

water trickling in from the far wall, lining it until it began to pool near my right foot where the moss spread out like a thick carpet. The sunlight came from a small opening in the ceiling, streaming down and illuminating some kind of stony path that had been created to mark the sun's position with some kind of time period, an underground version of a sundial.

"You've made quite the mess, haven't you?"

I quickly turned to face the speaker, the drider's green and black stripes easily marking his position along the far wall. He quietly walked down to the ground, leaning forward a little to gather some stones and placing them in some kind of mossy pouch around his waistline.

"I never meant to be this much of a hindrance."

"I know you weren't," He never appeared to look in my direction, as if he was willingly ignoring my presence, "It's not your fault that my brother becomes hyper-fixated on something. He tends to obsess over it before dropping interest completely."

"How long does that take?"

"Maybe a few hours, maybe a few moons," One set of his eyes flicked over to me, "You're scared of me."

"Every drider that I have met so far wants to feed on me, keep me as a pet, or wants nothing to do with me. I'd rather keep my distance so I can stay alive for as long as possible," I took a step away from him to prove a point.

"The older two are too caught up in their rivalry to really care, the younger two can become possessive over their 'found things', and I hold no fondness for whatever wanders into my nest," He tucked a few more stones into the pouch before bringing himself back into a 'standing' position, "This, however, is not my nest and thus you are not a threat."

"Yet."

His lips pulled into a knowing smirk, "You're a smart creature."

"I've dealt with enough people to know when they're not telling the whole truth," I huffed a little, crossing my arms over my chest as I adjusted my stance, "Just tell me this so I don't follow you into your nest: Is there another way out of here besides the main tunnel that's now collapsed?"

"The rooms with sunlight are the only ones with access points to the above world," The familiar voice of Kara immediately drew my attention towards a hidden tunnel off to my left, the blue tarantula drider stalking his way into the cave a few paces, "Seeing as how you can't climb, those little windows will be impossible for you to use."

"Can't one of you just

lift

me to one of them?"

"No! You can't leave!" Jyushi's panicked voice shouted in response, the now-familiar skittering sound ticking behind me before I was grabbed by a pair of arms and held close in a vice-like grip, "Don't trust them! They'll eat you!"

My mouth was smothered by one of his hands as I felt his firm webbing wrap around my arms and chest to keep me from escaping.

The wide-eyed panic on Jyushi's face did not pair well with the frenzied smile on his lips, "You're mine; trust me alone!"

"The more you tell her something, the less she'll believe it, Jyushi," The green drider called out, his face struck with a shocked expression, "You don't need to be so close to her all the time."

"Shut up, Choro. This has nothing to do with you," Jyushi diverted his attention for only a moment before snapping his focus back to me, his other hand trying to caress my face in some kind of caring gesture, "See, (y/n)? They don't know you like I do."

"It's not about the human, Jyushi! If you keep up this attention, you'll kill her faster than you mean to."

"You're the one who had said that you'd let a human wander around freely in these tunnels if given the chance, yet that one is being bound like prey," Kara commented, the frenzied expression on Jyushi's face calming down only a fraction, "Why have you changed your mind?"

"This one...(y/n) is special. I can't let her wander anywhere," Jyushi lifted his caressing hand from my face, still keeping my mouth sealed with the other, "(Y/n) is the only one that likes my gifts, and human customs say that when a gift is received, a special relationship forms between the two. She's mine now."

I furrowed my brow disapprovingly and tried to shake my head.

"How do you know that?" I heard the green drider speak from somewhere nearby.

"I overheard the other humans talking about it somewhere outside the tunnel. I offered them gifts, but they didn't take them. Only (y/n) did."

I tried to yank my head away from his hand, desperately wanting to tell my side of what really happened.

"Has she told you that she's now your human pet?" Kara stepped closer, his padfalls more notable than the green drider's.

"Of course she has," Jyushi's positive response was the opposite of my shaking head.

"Let go."

The command from Kara was stern, his tone holding a certain threat as Jyushi's face fell into a sudden mask of fear. His hand and arms instantly released me, allowing me to freefall to the ground and peel off the webbing that had been wound around my arms and chest.

"Human," The blue tarantula drider didn't move closer to me, allowing me to regain my composure, "Have you promised yourself to Jyushi since you stepped into our home?"

"Never."

Jyushi looked shocked and saddened at the statement, "But--"

"Have you ever received his 'gifts' as something promising a closer relationship, like Jyushi states?"

"Never."

"That's a lie!" The Joro drider shouted out, attempting to grab me again before Kara deftly pushed himself between us, "You took the molts back to your home! You accepted them!"

"I didn't accept the molts as gifts, Jyushi," I tried to explain past the shouting, "I took them back to study just in case they were a new lifeform. I had no idea that they were anything else other than a discarded molt from some form of arachnid."

"But..." The crestfallen look on Jyushi's face was hard to see, despite me telling the truth. He tried to come closer to me once more, cautiously tiptoeing around Kara's reach, "You looked so excited to see my nest..."

"I was, but what I wasn't expecting was to deal with a drider that clung to me like a long-lost lover," Ripping off the remnants of the webbing from my shirt, I moved in a way that kept Kara between Jyushi and myself, "To find out that the entire reason I'm now stuck down here...is because you somehow misconstrued my intentions absolutely baffles my mind. I

can't

live down here with you; my needs are much different than yours. I need to return to the surface."

"As we've stated, the only ways out are now the little windows of sun where we have water collection areas, but..." The green drider commented from

somewhere near the ceiling, "The holes aren't big enough to fit you through them without threatening the whole structure."

"Then the tunnel would need to be excavated?" I blinked in thought, pausing my circling only for a moment before I realized that Jyushi hadn't stopped his.

"The main tunnel entrance would need to be cleared out," Kara confirmed, keeping his distance from me while maintaining the barrier he clearly saw me using him for, "Then how about this proposal?"

In a few quick steps, he stopped Jyushi in his tracks and motioned for the other drider to come forward.

"I understand that most of us are curious about the human in our home, but we need ground rules. Jyushi should not be the only one to care for her should she remain with us while we wait for the tunnel to be opened back up."

"I'm the only one capable!" Jyushi protested, rearing up on his legs for a short moment.

"But you're not the only one interested," I heard a soft voice call out, tracking the sound to a place behind Jyushi. The pale spider legs were easily seen against the dark ground, each leg tentatively stepping forward while the humanoid arms were partially held out as if anticipating bumping into something. The pale drider had no eyes.

"Todo, you can't be serious," Jyushi hissed, instantly shifting his position to stand between me and the seemingly blind drider, "You tried to eat (y/n) last time!"

"I don't recall that happening," The youngest sibling hummed, tapping a finger against his bottom lip a few times before letting the hand fall into its neutral position, "I was only commenting on how you hunted, and how this was different for you."

"You were being overly touchy with this prey, and we became curious as to why you weren't hunting with your usual methods," Ichi's voice came from right next to Todo, the smaller drider nearly blending in with the dark earth beneath our feet, "I have no interest in eating her."

"If the human is to stay with us, then why don't we have volunteers to keep her alive until the rest of her herd comes to claim her?" The green drider spoke up.

"I thought you didn't have any intentions of interfering, Choro?" Kara barely lifted his gaze towards the drider.

"I don't plan to interfere, only wanting to settle a curiosity. I will help care for her."

"No, you can't!" Jyushi shouted, his voice echoing off the walls, "She's mine!"

"Yet she uses me as a shield against you," Kara hissed, his legs shuffling against a sudden rush from Jyushi. I scurried away from the two driders, watching with mixed horror and fascination as the Joro drider -- with thin, long legs and spindly carapace and abdomen -- took on a peacock tarantula, whose biology gave him more advantages against the thinner webspinner.

Jyushi had the reach advantage, but Kara had positioned himself in such a way that he wasn't in any danger from the fangs of the younger drider. His front two walking legs had lifted up and pushed away Jyushi's four fore-walking legs, giving him clearance as fingernails scratched at skin. Another two steps had Jyushi almost perpendicular to the ceiling, the younger realizing his position too late as Kara took another large step, fully pushing over the younger drider onto the ground in a mass of tangled legs. Kara reared up, his black fangs flashing in the scarce sunlight before he lunged downward--

"Enough."

The simple command held four driders still as Jyushi flailed to right himself, every pair of eyes locked onto the mass of red walking hair that

strode into the cave with purpose.

"The rules are there for a reason. We are not to interfere with anything that lives outside of our tunnels," The eldest drider huffed as his eyes locked onto my figure, "However, that was before the tunnel collapsed. My little brother seems determined to keep you by his side, no matter what we say, and that pisses me off."

"I'll take care of--"

A glare from Oso was all it took to silence Jyushi, "You've done enough to endanger all of us, Jyushi. Your desire for this human has done substantial damage to both our home and our livelihood. Because of this, it's only fair that we now shoulder the burden you've wanted to keep for yourself."

"You mean...you want us to help take care of (y/n)?" Kara took a tentative step back, his right hand rubbing his left forearm, "Is that such a good idea?"

"What other choice is there?" Oso settled himself lower to the ground, relaxing his rearmost walking legs and abdomen for the time being, "I either let Jyushi have sole control over how he takes care of the human, or I ensure that there's no conflict by dividing the chore. We aren't left with many options until the tunnel is cleared."

"Are you not able to clear the tunnel yourselves?" I spoke quietly, finding myself between Oso and Todo.

"Clearing the tunnel ourselves is not the issue," The eldest turned his head towards me, all eight eyes focused on my form, "Doing so would make the outside world aware of our presence, and more humans would become more curious about what dug out the tunnel."

I lowered my eyes, not seeing the flaw in his statement.

My teammates would wonder how a tunnel opening that size excavated itself and delve deeper into the driders' nests, eventually finding the driders themselves.

Who knows what would happen beyond that?

"Okay, then I'm stuck here, as you say," I crossed my arms over my chest in defeat, "Am I to be handed off between the six of you?"

"Every quarter moon or so. You'll need to provide a basic knowledge of your species, and we will provide what we're able to within our capabilities," Oso stood back up, stretching some of his walking legs before moving towards the larger tunnel, "The ones interested in helping you will speak to you."

"...and you won't?"

I caught the pause in Oso's movements, the quick glance my way before he continued forward, "That remains to be seen."

I counted the days on my watch, conversing with the five driders that stayed behind to help me settle in for the long haul.

Two days, then a week. A month passed.

Seven months.

The tunnel entrance never opened again and I quickly learned to live with the driders, taking each day as it came and forming friendly bonds with most of them. After conferring with Oso, I was given permission to widen some of the holes to allow myself a path to gather what I needed from the surrounding jungle. Whomever I was being watched by would always tether some webbing to my waist so that I could never 'escape', but I had given up that notion before the seventh month passed.

If the people that I had come with weren't willing to look for me, then I wasn't going to go find them.

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References (sizes are scaled up to match imagined humanoid measurements):

Oso (king baboon tarantula,

Pelinobius muticus)Leg length: 7 feet 9 inches, divided between five segments (including paws)

Kara (peacock tarantula,

Poecilotheria metallica)Leg length: 7 feet, divided between five segments (including paws)

Choro (banded metallic green jumping spider,

Cosmophasis micans)Leg length: 5 feet 5 inches, divided between five segments (including paws)

Ichi (purple-gold jumping spider,

Irura bidenticulata)

Leg length: 4 feet 9 inches, divided between five segments (including paws). Forelegs are 6 feet 5 inches, divided between three segments.

Jyushi (Joro spider,

Trichonephila clavata)Leg length: 12 feet, divided between three segments

Todo - (eyeless huntsman spider,

Sinopoda scurion

)

Leg length: 10 feet 2 inches, divided between five segments (including paws)

Brothers and Sister!Reader

Osomatsu giggled like a buffoon as he slowly pulled open the forbidden drawer, someone groaning in exasperation behind him.

"I'm not taking the blame for this dumb idea."

"It's only dumb if we get

caught

," The eldest barely rolled his eyes as his fingers plucked the soft fabric from its resting place, the pure white dye catching the men's eyes in wonder.

How could something so pure be pressed against such a provocative thing?

"Great. We looked," The speaker from before sounded much more uncomfortable, "Now can we go?"

"Come on. She always wears such form-fitting clothes and we're

all

curious what it's like to wear them."

"

She

is our sister! Not some woman that we don't know!"

Osomatsu grabbed a neatly folded shirt and threw it at the third-eldest, cutting him off, "You're the one that's gonna bust us. Sis is at work, so we've got some time before she comes home."

Choromatsu yelped quietly as the thrown fabric unraveled itself and draped over his head and upheld arm, staring at the fashion shirt with wide eyes, seeing the ceiling light through the material, "What the...this is rice-paper thin!"

"I know, right?" The eldest laughed, drawing Choromatsu's attention to the tight shirt pressing against his undershirt. His hands lifted up to his breasts, "I wonder if these stretch out with boobs..."

With a furious blush, Choromatsu waded the shirt up into a ball and slammed it into Osomatsu's face, dragging a surprised exclamation from him before he fell to the floor, "Take that off!"

"It's just clothes, Fappymatsu. We've worn women's clothing before, so why is

her

clothing off-limits?" Ichimatsu reached into the same drawer and brought out what looked to be denim jeans, shaking them out to reveal the denim short skirt, "Even trannies wear this kind of stuff."

"But..." The third eldest could only watch in a stupor as the oldest and fourth brother proceeded to don full outfits, his hands limp at his sides.

"Relax, Fappymatsu," Todomatsu piped up behind him, bringing out his phone and snapping some pictures as the two crossdressers began to pose for the camera, "She won't know that we did this. Besides, she wears

our

clothes all the time."

"Wearing our hoodies and shirts is different than--

what are you doing?!

"

The shout was directed at Jyushimatsu, the wild brother having taken off all his clothes and slid on the white bra from earlier, the stupidly-infectious smile turned Choromatsu's way, "Muscle holders!"

He flexed his arms and chest, the fabric straining to stay clasped on as he posed every which way. The cups of the bra were firm, staying upright despite Jyushimatsu's pectorals barely filling them.

Choromatsu's face flushed at the thought of the bra flexing around supple breasts, a trickle of warmth ebbing from his nose.

"Hah!" Todomatsu teased, "Big brother Choromatsu has a nosebleed!"

"N-no, I don't!" He pressed his hand against a nostril, feeling it become slick with blood.

Osomatsu wrapped an arm behind Choromatsu's neck, slightly bending him over as a wide smile spread on his lips, "You know you wanna try this on..."

The eldest held up a hanger with a slim dress hanging over it, the green color mixing perfectly with the blue against the black background. Their sister had worn this at her high school reunion and the sextuplets all agreed that she looked good in it.

"...only to get you pieces of shit off my back," Choromatsu closed his eyes as he pulled off his green hoodie, unbuttoning his white shirt and dropping his pants. The other brothers waited with baited breath as he pulled the dress over his head and let the stretchy fabric fall around him.

He paused when he opened his eyes, the left eye twitching in uncertainty as he saw them staring back in amazement, "...what."

"Dude, you should crossdress more often," Osomatsu laughed, "Try a wig on sometime."

Choromatsu's face flushed once more -- in anger this time -- as his fists clenched tightly, "Look at what you're wearing, Osoko!"

The attention finally shifted to Osomatsu, the four pairs of eyes locked onto the old school uniform: a sailor suit with the kind of skirt that rode up a little

too

high.

The eldest blinked at what he was wearing, staying in absolute silence before looking back at his brothers, "Nice breeze down there."

The men burst out laughing.

"How can women wear this without chafing?!"

"Why do their clothes pucker in unflattering places?"

"Imagine if our fashions were switched! Guys would be so fucked!"

"In more than one way," Todomatsu let out a shrill laugh, tears streaming down his face.

"

WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU ASSHOLES DOING!?

"

"(Y/n)?!" The four brothers screamed in horror, all of them shirking away in a feminine fashion as the door to their sister's bedroom slammed open. A pair of dark hues glared at them in silent fury, a dark aura wafting off the newcomer as their hair seemingly came to life and writhed around like snakes.

(Y/n) gritted her teeth, taking in the mess that her room was now in; clothes were scattered around the room, panties and bras tossed about with abandon while her shirts and dresses were unfurled.

Osomatsu was dressed in her old school uniform that she had kept in a sealed bag, wanting to preserve the outfit for nostalgia and conventions.

Choromatsu wore her reunion dress -- she could only pray that he had his

underwear

on.

Ichimatsu had found her part-time job uniform, the short shorts riding up uncomfortably high on his thighs while the crop tee revealed his semi-pudgy belly.

Jyushimatsu was wearing her bra...and

only

her bra.

Todomatsu chose to wear one of her cosplay outfits; a fluffed-up red skirt with black hem, his waistline cinched tight by a black leather corset as a tight black shirt clung to his chest with red frills along the short-sleeve hems and neckline.

"...get out."

"(Y/n), listen--"

"

GET OUT!!

" She rushed the closest brother, grabbing Choromatsu's hair and throwing him out of the room, missing the door by a few inches, "You fuckers crossed the

line

this time!"

"It's just clothes," Ichimatsu scrambled to flee her reach, ducking low and rolling towards the closed window, "You can wear ours if it'll balance the scales!"

(Y/n)'s fingers entangled themselves in the neckerchief around Osomatsu's neck, wringing the fabric into a noose. The eldest coughed and choked before she jabbed an elbow into his gut, following the hit with a body slam into the wall. He slumped down the floor, his eyes completely white.

"Whoa, hey!" Ichimatsu raised his hands in surrender when he found himself backed into a corner, "(Y/n), I'll get out of the clothes, okay?!"

"Five."

Ichimatsu paused for a millisecond before realizing she was giving him a countdown, quickly shedding the work uniform and grabbing his own clothes, scampering to the safety of the hallway.

She stopped counting and looked at Todomatsu from over her shoulder.

"...oop."

The struggle to get the corset off was much harder than he was expecting, finally peeling the thing off when (y/n) was one step away from him. She stilled when he dropped the garments in front of her, backing up and fleeing the room entirely.

Jyushimatsu's laugh shattered the quiet, his sister's eyes only glaring at his own, "You're really mad."

"You're naked in my room."

"Not totally," His lips hid his teeth while still holding his smile, his hands reaching down and pulling up the discarded briefs, "...better?"

"...you're really wanting to do this?" (Y/n) flexed her fingers, cracking the joints as they curled into fists.

He shook his head, "Not while you're this mad."

Jyushimatsu instantly ducked, (y/n)'s fist colliding with the wall where his head used to be.

"Take the bra off, wash every garment you fuckers have worn," The ultimatum was easy to fulfill, "Give the clothes to Mom when they're finished."

The fifth youngest brother simply hummed as he collected the discarded clothes, the tournament trophies displayed on the shelf above (y/n)'s desk still polished and boasting of her combat abilities. He closed his eyes in a happy expression as he left the room, dragging the unconscious Osomatsu by his left arm.

"Can we fight again when it's done?" Jyushimatsu didn't turn around to face (y/n), readjusting his grip on Osomatsu.

"...yeah," He heard the smile in her voice, "I'll go easy on you next time."

"Easy?" He laughed in response, taking the stairs down to the main level of the house.

"Only on you," She called out before the bedroom door closed with finality.

Werewolf!Brothers and Reader

Inspired by cozycornerofmadness's prompt.

(I will use terms that reflect the wolf pack hierarchal structure.

They do not reflect the ABO-verse terms.

)

Alpha:

A dominant wolf or pair of wolves that leads the pack, the first to feed from any kill the pack makes.

A middle rank wolf or pair of wolves that command the others within the same rank or lower, considered the second-in-command and most likely to replace the current alpha.

A wolf that plays the role of scapegoat and acts as the 'social glue' to keep the pack together, regardless if this is accomplished through play or comfort. They are usually the last wolf that's allowed to feed.

His breath wisped between his tense maw, quietly whistling with every exhale as his eyes swept across the vast field where his pack had played, had hunted, had lain for the season.

What once was pure and white with snow was now stained with red and brown, fur and viscera scattered across the hills as echoes of screams rang in his wolfish ears.

Slowly crouching from the standing position, he began sifting through the thick scents of terror and anguish from his pack, the joyous revelry of the humans that struck with little warning. The scent trails began forming an image in his mind of the slaughter: pups and wolves alike fleeing from the hunters that had come upon the gathering by chance, his beta directing the

lower-ranked wolves to safety while his mate remained steadfast to ensure that the hunters could not follow, the pack omega fleeing last as his file demanded.

The single wolf pushed through the scents of hunters killing off many of his pack to find the two trails he was desperate for, his heart aching to find their bodies and give them the farewell they deserved.

A whimper fell from his lips like a gasp, his wolfish nose digging into the bloodied snow that had been kicked up when the pursuers gave chase after the tattered remains of the pack, his claws gently raking off the stray snowflakes that fell through the night sky.

His heart grieved, his baying howl echoed far in the distance by five others in response.

His mate lay slain, her form bearing wounds that could only come from human weapons and human hands. Her chest lay bare to the night sky, a bloodied cavern exposing her ribcage and lungs that revealed that the monsters had stolen her heart as a war prize. Her ruined hair and blood-soaked silhouette only highlighted the mutilation of the alpha female lupine.

The wolf's furred fingers trailed softly down her face, closing her staring eyes, carefully bringing her into his arms as he stood on his rear legs, releasing another baleful howl in earnest. Carefully walking towards a tree reaching skyward at the edge of the field, his heart wrenched in sorrow as all hope of finding his family alive faded like snow near a fire.

The pup -- his only offspring -- lay beheaded and missing his wolfish ears and tail just like his mother.

The wolf-man stood tall on his hind legs, his furred hands and forearms now coated with dirt, as he looked down at his mate and pup now gently positioned within the grave he had scratched out. One more caress of her cheek, one more lick of the pup's forehead, before he buried them. With them, he buried his empathy.

He had given the hunter too many chances to strike up a peace accord, too many disrupted hunts that were brushed off because the wolf-man knew his pack couldn't fight off the hunter and his humans.

Oso would slaughter the hunter next time he laid eyes on the monster.

"My daughter," The man's joyful shout rang out in the sizable dining hall, the carved stonework acting as an echochamber for the few humans sitting underneath the ceiling fully decorated with hunted beasts and prey, "Today will mark the first time you join me on a hunt! What thoughts are in that head of yours?"

The teenaged woman, no older than eighteen, turned her attention from the food she had been consuming to the man who had spoken to her across the length of the table, "I'm incredibly excited, father! I can't wait to help you hunt down the beasts that encroach our safety, to help keep the land safe from devilish creatures."

"You'll grow into a fine huntress, your sharp dagger and wit at your side."

"Though that's quite far into the future, father," She laughed, waving her empty fork towards him as her free hand partially cupped her cheek, "Tell me about that lycan hunt again! It sounded fun."

"Those shapeshifting wolves again? (Y/n), it's already been a few months since," The man closed his eyes with a wide grin settling on his lips.

"So? You're the hero that saved your band from the surprise attack!"

"Indeed..." His eyes barely opened while the smile remained, "We were quite outnumbered by the cursed pack, nearly fifteen-to-one, yet we were able to pick off the strongest fighters to demoralize their animalistic mentality. Soon, the snow ran red with their blood instead of ours."

He lifted his hand towards the wall behind (y/n), gesturing towards a large wooden plaque that bore the trophies the hunters had brought home --

fifteen sets of wolfish ears, small and large combined.

"That pack is no more."

(Y/n) eyed the smaller ears as she usually did, fondly imagining the smaller wolf-men acting as berserkers. Her father had told her about these things, assuring her that the smaller ears weren't from children, only from the more vicious killers.

"What manner of creature will we be hunting tonight?" (Y/n) turned her gaze back towards her father, who was finishing up his meal.

"We will find out when we roam the forest along the hunting trails," He responded when appropriate, "The reports have been quiet when it comes to wildlife within our woods, so this will be more of a preliminary scouting hunt."

If she was honest with herself for a moment, (y/n) was scared.

With her figure securely armored with light yet durable leather armor crafted from the hides of slain prey, she felt safe. The sheathed dagger was lashed to her right side, the strap meant to hold it in place tied loose so it could be removed quickly.

The gathering of hunters was small compared to the last hunting party, a mere eight instead of the usual twenty.

She took this as a sign that it really would be a scouting hunt. No specific prey to track down.

Her father patted a hand on her shoulder, drawing her focus up to him, "Just keep close, (y/n). Use the signal flare if you get into trouble."

With a nod, he lifted his gaze to address the men. He talked about how the trail would weave in and out of the woods before looping back across the meadows to the castle, about how he expected them to act, how to call out potential prey, how to mark a feeding ground or a game trail.

Her heart was beating so loudly in her ears that she nearly jumped when his hand left her shoulder as the group moved from the front gates with all intent towards the woods. Her palms became sweaty, the leather not acting as a great absorber for the natural fluid.

Before she realized it, (y/n) took her first step into the woods as the sunlight became choked out by the thick tree canopy.

It was almost ethereal as the sounds of the meadows faded into the smothered silence of the wood, bright fading to dim with light spots dancing upon the figures of the men in front of her as they walked nearly single-file down the hunting trail. The men themselves had become quiet, her heart once more banging like a drum in her ears.

Yet, she never felt nervous.

These capable men were the best her father had for a hunt, each of the decorated in some piece of trophy.

If anything should happen

, she thought,

I will be safe with these men.

But it had happened so fast -- a shout from her father about a wolf-man, a raised cry from those in front of her as they quickly pursued.

(Y/n) had been left behind.

"Hey, don't worry," A voice startled her as her hand flew to the dagger, gripping the handle tightly before another hand held hers down, "We can catch up with them."

A single hunter had stayed behind, his lips offering a gentle smile as he encouraged her forward to follow the rest of the group.

"Your father taught you to track, right?" She nodded in response before he continued, "Go ahead and start tracking. It should be easy to spot with the

ruckus they caused in the dirt."

(Y/n) turned her gaze downwards as she saw what the hunter was talking about: many footfalls churning up dirt and leaves as the feet creating them dug in for traction.

"There, you see it," The hunter moved up next to her, "Now let's follow."

He led the charge at a pace (y/n) could keep up with, only a few strides ahead when something large and black crashed into him from the left. It completely shoved him off his feet, drawing a shout of pain and warning from the hunter before he could arm himself.

(Y/n) froze in her tracks, staring with wide eyes as the 'something' loomed above the hunter...no, it had the hunter's throat in its jaw. She silently whimpered as a sickening '

crunch

' sounded, the hunter no longer struggling.

A louder '

snap

' and the hunter's body fell to the ground...headless. A dull '

thud

' announced the decapitated skull landing a few seconds later.

She wanted to scream, her fingers locked in terror nearly wrapped around her dagger's handle.

A mass of blackish fur towering above her height, the creature standing on its rear legs as one of its furred arms lifted up to its elongated maw. The glint of red in its fur caught some of the sunlight peering through the canopy, mixing almost beautifully with the blackish color. Its eyes were a

blood-red color that appeared to gleam like a gem in the sunlight, the small black pupils ensuring that it was looking at (y/n).

It was looking right at her

.

Her voice caught in her throat as its wolfish ears pricked up, the long furred tail lashing behind its hulking figure as it crouched down onto all four limbs.

(Y/n) tried to swallow her fear, her mind immediately labeling the monster in front of her as a wolf-man. She forced her fingers to grip her dagger tightly, yanking it out of the sheath and holding it in front of her as she was taught. Fear and instinct were screaming in her nerves to run; her father's voice and hours of training forced her to plant her feet into a stable stance.

The rolling growl from the monster's throat stirred her to attack, its eyes watching warily as she yelled out while running towards the creature.

The dagger's aim was meant to pierce the throat of the wolf-man, her hopes ripped asunder as the beast simply lifted an arm to use as a shield. The dagger blade sank its full length into the forearm, drawing a shocked cry from (y/n) who didn't expect the monster to use a human tactic and a guttural grunt from the beast as its wolfish lips pulled back into a sneer.

She tried to pull the dagger out, struggling in the few seconds she had before it raised its arm above and behind it, her own arms outstretched helplessly as the dagger was ripped from her grip.

(Y/n) realized the opening too late, her wide-eyed stare shifting to see the monster's open maw full of fanged teeth clamp down on her left forearm. With a furious shake of its head, the teeth dug deeper into her flesh, carving through the leather armor like it was only paper while she shrieked in pain, held fast by its grip.

"No!" She screamed out, her right hand frantically and with futility shoving the upper lip of the wolfman in an attempt to pry its jaw from her forearm.

The lip only revealed how deep its fangs had sunk through the leather armor, blood ebbing from the bite while its saliva dripped into each puncture. (Y/n) could feel her body chill at the vicious realization, her breathing becoming erratic before her right hand reached for the signal flare that her father had supplied her with, the small tube of flammable powder breaking as intended when she slammed it against the wolf-man's head, "Release me!"

The powder sparked, ignited, flared to life as a bright red light swallowed her senses, the flare tube dropping from her hand in surprise before she felt a sudden release on her left forearm. Withdrawing the wounded limb back freely, (y/n) fell to the ground as heavy footfalls indicated the creature's retreat.

"No...this can't be..." Words of disbelief tumbled from her lips as she stared at the lycan bite deep within her arm, the clear and sticky fluid seeping into the open wounds. Clutching the wounded limb close, she brought up her free hand to block out the signal flare's light to find the dead hunter's body, crawling close and ripping some fabric free from his armor. Wrapping the wound tightly and ensuring that no bite marks were exposed, she stayed close to the dead man's body as shouts came closer.

(Y/n) remained in her bedchambers for the next few days, only seeing her maid and her father when she felt it was safe enough to show herself.

The fever raged in her body more than ever, her lunar charts indicating that the full moon was only a night away. Her bedroom curtains were never drawn back in fear of letting the moonlight in, the fireplace stoked nearly night and day to ensure that nothing could climb down the chimney, and the door cautiously lined with garlic paste she had procured from the kitchens.

Her left forearm throbbed with every heartbeat, the bandage poorly fastened as she refused help to take care of the wound.

(Y/n) wasn't even sure if her father completely bought the excuse about the savage deer attack on her and the slain hunter. She was sure that his body had been retrieved, examined, and discarded correctly, but her father never questioned her again on what happened.

She was certain that it was becoming harder and harder to hide the symptoms she was experiencing: the fever that never seemed to break, the fatigue that barely allowed her to walk to her desk anymore, the paleness of her skin as her hair became a little bit thicker and coarser to the touch, the desire for raw meat when she was given cooked chicken for her meals...the growing thirst for taking down prey.

She had tempered what she could with what was available to her in the bedroom, never asking for anything more than normal when the maid had given her a strange look at the request for extra garlic cloves.

(Y/n) had studied a little bit about the wolf-men and their society from her father's library, had known when the black-and-red wolf-man gripped her forearm tightly in his maw what it meant. It was how they spread their curse to humans, to inject their saliva somehow into whatever open wound was available to them.

Her thoughts wandered once again to that brief moment before either of them attacked.

The lycan hadn't charged at her after it had killed the hunter, merely standing there until she attacked first.

Would it have let her go free?

(Y/n) shook her head at the thought, her eyes closing as the fire within her body raged. One of her hands reached for the sidetable next to her bed, her fingers gently picking up and ringing the small brass bell to summon the maid.

A nice cool bath would do her wonders.

When her maid entered the room, she made her intentions clear and waited for the maid to draw the fresh bath using the sealed wooden tub on the other side of the room, a dressing blind positioned between it and the rest of the room.

Her nightgown was heavy on her frame, the maid assisting when the bath was fully drawn. (Y/n) was more than happy to settle within the cool, fresh water that was lightly scented by rose petals, her feverish body allowed a break from fighting off the internal heat by itself as her muscles relaxed.

"Allow me, miss."

There was only a second between when the maid spoke and when she felt the days-old bandage fall from her wounded forearm, (y/n) realizing her mistake of letting her guard down too soon before the maid screamed out in terror.

The wolf-man's bite mark, the teeth leaving a near-perfect oval shape, was now revealed for all to see.

"Sire! Sire, your daughter!" The maid was screaming down the hall as she fled from (y/n)'s side, the young woman scrambling to get out of the bath and don the nightgown once more.

She knew her father, knew that he wouldn't listen to reason.

He had taught her that the only way to cure lycanthropy disease was to snuff out what it had touched.

(Y/n) had wanted more time to find out if there was another way to cure herself, but now her father wouldn't give her that time. She had to escape quickly.

The woods...the wolf-man!

(Y/n) gathered her open nightgown around her like a cloak and struggled out the door, hobbling down the stone hallway while using a wall to prop herself up. Her wet feet slapped against the cold floor as she turned a corner to where she knew a servant's exit was, her lungs begging for a break as the fever rolled through her chilled skin once more.

"To think--" The '

thud

' of a firing crossbow was her only warning to pull back as a metallic bolt slammed into a stone brick close to her leading hand, "To think that my own flesh and blood would succumb to some beast's wiles."

She barely glanced back to see her father donned in his hunting armor, the thought chilling her skin more as the discovery happened just as he was readying for a hunt. He reloaded the large crossbow deftly, taking aim at her once more.

"You're no daughter of mine, monster."

"Father, wait!" (Y/n) cried out as she tried to run towards the door now visible on the far left wall, "Don't do this!"

"No spawn of mine would run from their fate!" He shouted angrily, almost challenging her to stand still. A fired bolt sunk into the floor near her feet, spurring her onwards as she continued running as fast as she could down the hallway that seemed to stretch on forever.

There was no point in talking to him anymore -- she understood this.

The wooden door gave way to her frantic push, releasing its catch easily and swinging wide open to reveal the woods a few minutes walk away from the castle edge.

The moon was full.

(Y/n) released a sob, her throat tight from sadness, defeat, and an unwillingness to believe what was happening in the moment, yet her feet carried her from the castle to the woods while her father hunted her down like the monster she was becoming.

Her vision plunged into darkness, her heartbeat banging like a wardrum in her chest as fire consumed her veins.

She couldn't recall dreaming of anything while she remained unconscious, her eyes barely opening while someone fussed with her left forearm. There

was conversation, but the words eluded definition.

She felt so hot.

"-- should've just left her where she fell," A low growl sounded before a harsh snap was heard, the sound like two hollow logs clunking together.

"Don't doubt his decision."

"Never do, but I'm still free to complain when I think it's a bad idea," The same voice responded with slightly less hostility.

(Y/n) could feel a slight tug on her left forearm again, the movement drawing a soft groan from her throat as gentle pain radiated from the contact. There was another pull on her skin -- sharper this time -- and she opened her eyes fully to gaze at a rocky crag rolling over her head to form some kind of shelter.

"Stay still. I'm not done."

The voice drew her attention to a man hunched over her left arm, one of his hands holding a crude needle that plunged down into her skin before poking through the other side of one of the teeth marks that had yet to fully heal. The pain became excruciating as he tugged on whatever he used as thread, a yelp sounding from her throat before she tried to yank her arm away from the man.

Before the thought finished crossing her mind, his free hand clamped down on her wrist and pinned the arm to the ground. A pair of yellow eyes flashed up to hers in the dim light, their gaze holding more than a warning, "I said 'stay still'."

"Best if you follow what the beta commands," Another masculine voice called out, soft footfalls growing closer until another man became illuminated by the soft orange glow that grew brighter as (y/n)'s eyes adjusted.

Both men had humanoid faces, but the wolf ears that were clearly outlined by the moonlight and orange glow instantly marked them as wolf-men. They both had large tufts of fur that sprouted from behind their wolfish ears, trailing down their necks and merging into a large pelt over their backs. Their chests and upper arms remained bare while the rest of their body was covered in fur, pelts of different hides stitched together to make some kind of clothing that hung around their waists and necks.

Each humanoid face was scarred with a mixture of those won in battle and those that were etched onto their faces with paint or stain. The newcomer boasted his blue eyes in the moonlit reflection.

Neither expression they wore was friendly.

(Y/n) quickly averted her eyes before seeing a third pair of glowing eyes from deep within the shadows of the supposed cave. The red glint was unmistakable.

The wolfman that she had encountered in the forest -- the same one that bit her -- slowly emerged into the soft orange light (a campfire, she realized). He was no longer the large monster that had slain the hunter in front of her, but the fur on his humanoid body held the same color.

His very presence was commanding, his harsh gaze holding no tenderness for the monster she was becoming. (Y/n) lowered her gaze and quietly suffered as the yellow-eyed wolfman continued to sew her wounds shut.

"Look at me."

The demand was instantly met, her fearful gaze lifting to meet the red-eyed wolfman.

"If you can prove yourself useful to my pack, I will give you shelter."

Anger bubbled in her gut, her teeth gnashing before she could stop herself, "

You're

the one that made me like this! If you'd just rolled over and died under my father's blade, none of this would've happened!"

The one stitching her arm released his hold, severing the thread. The blue-eyed wolfman took a step back.

The one she'd condemned was instantly on top of her as the others made their action.

His fangs flashed in the campfire's light, absolute hatred rolling off his body as his hands tightly gripped her arms and spread them out as far as they could go, his taloned feet digging into her shins and fully pinning her down, "

Your family

was the one that intruded on our territory! How

dare

you assume that you are without blame! Your clan slaughtered my own without mercy, yet I extended some to you."

"You call turning me into a monstrosity a 'mercy'?" Rage fuelled (y/n)'s words despite fully knowing that the creature overpowering her could end her life with a snap of his jaws, "You've ruined my life! I'll never be loved again! Your 'mercy' is killing me."

"My mercy is what's keeping you alive," The volume was quieter than he had used previously, but his eyes still warned of the threat, "You want to see how I can ruin your life? You want to see what it means to never be held close by a loved one again? Continue to try my patience."

Her mouth dried as he spoke, noticing too late that he had been lowering his head towards hers until she felt his breath on her cheeks.

"I will make the offer one more time: prove yourself useful to my pack and I will give you shelter."

With a snap of his jaw, the red-eyed wolfman pushed himself to his feet and strode back into the darkness, leaving (y/n) paralyzed with fear as the yellow-eyed wolfman came near once more.

She didn't flinch as he continued his stitching.

(Y/n) passively watched as the wolfman pack stirred in the early morning hours, the sunlight barely peeking over the wooded horizon. She had remained by the fire throughout the night, not daring to stoke the cooling coal back into flame. None of the others approached her until the sun beckoned their awakening, her eyes catching the movement of six different forms within the cave where she was brought.

None of their eyes glowed in the daylight, but now she saw clearly that they had stained their fur in different colors. (Y/n) wondered if the staining had any purpose to them.

The red-dyed wolfman stalked out of the cave without sparing her a glance, his presence smothering any intention of moving away from the fire pit. The yellow-dyed wolfman closely followed him out, ignoring her completely.

"They're heading out to hunt for the pack," A soft voice startled (y/n), her focus snapping to see a wolfman with blue dyed fur squatting next to her, a small stick in his hand as he poked at the embers.

"Then...are they in charge?" Her lips felt dry before a cold shudder rushed through her body. The morning was unusually chilly for late spring.

"Oso is our alpha. Jyushi is the second-in-command," His gaze flicked over to her, "The red wolf and yellow wolf, respectively. My name's Kara."

"I'm..." She faltered, drawing a short laugh from the blue wolfman.

"I know who you are," He stood up and stretched his arms for a moment, his wolf ears pinned back for the movement, "You're that hunter's daughter."

"...yeah."

"Don't get friendly with her," A bark echoed in the cave, (y/n) nearly jumping out of her skin as a wolfman with green dyed fur padded towards the cave entrance.

"She looked confused about how to identify us, Choro, so I just took liberty to help," Kara closed his eyes and gave a playful smirk, "Besides, Oso made the rule clear last night."

(Y/n) lowered her eyes as she thought back to his offer: find a way to make herself useful or she'd be forced to leave.

The pack was more lycan-like than she was. She had to assume that they were born this way while she was bitten.

Another two wolfmen left the cave without looking at her, one with purple-dyed fur and the other holding a dull pink color. Choro and Kara bantered as they eventually left to prove their usefulness, leaving her alone.

(Y/n) doubted that a wolf pack would need anything like housekeeping, but she could go gather bedding that they would use. Taking a cautious stroll around the larger cave revealed that the six nests were mostly fallen leaves and fur patches from previous hunts.

With no tools at her disposal, she resigned herself to refreshing the firewood stock with dead sticks and logs, collecting more dead foliage until she couldn't hold anything more. Casting the foliage over the six nests, she stacked the larger wood fuel in an area where they wouldn't be in the way.

As she made her way out for a second trip to gather more bedding, the pink-furred wolfman had returned, only offering a scoff as he shouldered his way past her. Various stones were gathered in his arms.

A third trip led to (y/n) walking back to the cave with the purple-furred wolfman, though the journey was silent.

It wasn't until the sun was high in the sky when Oso and Jyushi returned, blood smeared over their mouths and hands. They dragged a partially devoured deer carcass with them.

A mixture of disgust and hunger rolled through (y/n)'s stomach, uncertain if she was to eat the meat raw or cooked anymore.

The others besides Kara took their fill of the food, only allowing him to approach when Oso had walked towards his bed towards the back of the cave.

(Y/n) tentatively took some meat near the deer's shoulder and neck, skewering it onto a thin branch and holding it over the fire. She figured it would be better to remain safe than eat raw meat.

(Y/n) slowly carved out her place in the pack, tending to the more menial chores that the pack seemed to leave for her. Her presence drew less and less ire as she sequestered herself into a corner of the cave that was rarely used or walked by.

Weeks passed before she thought she heard the alpha walk close by her bed, his footfalls distinct from the others. (Y/n) couldn't rouse herself from sleep, dreaming that her left forearm was being wrapped gently in the softest fur she'd ever felt. When she awoke, the bite mark was completely clean, as if someone had washed it while she slept.

"Oso!"

The urgent shout came from Jyushi, startling (y/n) as she finished up her first hide garment and Oso who had been napping on his bedding. The alpha was quick to stand at the cave entrance, bracing the beta wolfman as he recovered from the demanding run.

"There's...a hunting party in our woods...!" Jyushi took a large breath, "It's

him

!"

A wave of hatred swept over Oso's form, his fur bristling at the mentioned person. His worried expression fell away as a fanged sneer pulled viciously at his lips, the blood red hue in his eyes locking onto (y/n)'s frightened expression.

"It's time to prove your usefulness to the pack."

The pack of six wolfmen had quickly gathered at Oso's howl, following Jyushi's trail back to where he had seen the hunting party. (Y/n) was able to keep up at their speed, albeit barely, smothering her mouth to keep from panting loudly when they had stopped near a ridge within the woods. Kara pressed himself close to her, offering her the fur on his back to breathe into as a mask. She took his unspoken offer, partially grooming his tail as a token of thanks.

Oso took up prime position, barely edging over the ridge and quickly ducking back down. His eyes gave silent commands, dividing up the pack into smaller units and pressing them into a flank order. (Y/n) was partnered with Kara, the omega wolfman and the freshly-turned lycanthrope human that barely had any control of her abilities.

He disappeared over the ridge as his body contorted, fur covering every inch of his bare skin. Oso was gone to start the pursuit.

Kara urged (y/n) into a run, his own figure mimicking what Oso had done as dark blue tinged fur swallowed his humanoid form. A wolf muzzle protruded from his face, his paws and feet growing larger while the talons within each limb did the same.

While she had no dramatic transformation, (y/n) knew that her 'curse' had given her more strength and agility, the dull human teeth becoming more like those that the wolfmen bore.

Kara turned sharply towards the left, letting loose a yowl as he pounced on one of the straggling hunters. Cries of shock and yells of anger rang out all around (y/n), following Kara's direction and jumping onto someone she didn't recognize.

Her claws mauled their neck and chest, her teeth snapped as a guttural growl rolled within her throat. (Y/n) didn't mind the prey underneath her; she had been pressed to kill many things for the pack, and humans were one of the many things they hunted.

A snap of motion out of the corner of her eye caught her attention, turning to see the bolt of a crossbow aimed towards Kara a few lengths in front of her. Letting out a yelp of warning, she jumped from the felled human underneath her to the hunter aiming the weapon. The bolt was launched from the crossbow, whizzing past her as her hands pushed the weapon up to aim at the sky. She didn't hear Kara's reaction, solely focusing on the person in front of her.

The short hair that held the same color as hers, the fierce hues that glared at her in anger; everything about her father was the same as when she last saw him.

"You've...survived?"

(Y/n) snarled as they fought over the crossbow, her father nearly overpowering her unnatural strength. A sharp pain lanced through her right side, her hands releasing the crossbow and pressing against the bleeding wound. A silvered dagger caught her eye as her father aimed it at her. She remembered how he taught her how to handle such a weapon, how he had gifted her the same one that he currently used.

He quickly reloaded the ranged weapon, walking backwards to gain distance before (y/n) staggered towards him.

She found her footing before he pulled the trigger, launching herself into his body and throwing him down to the ground. The silvered dagger lay cast aside near her right knee.

"You will

not

be the one to kill me, monster!"

"He's the last. Finish it," Oso's voice boomed through the woods, drawing (y/n)'s attention to her six packmates standing around the grappling pair.

"Alpha, please do it...He's my father!" (Y/n)'s desperate voice was quiet from the previous fighting, her strength beginning to fail as she felt her mental strength weaken.

Oso's red eyes flicked from her to the human struggling underneath her, his long tail lashing in anger.

"I will not."

The phrase shattered (y/n)'s resignation, his generous offer echoing in her head.

She had to prove herself useful to the pack. She would be safe with them.

(Y/n)'s scream of anger, remorse, and desperation rang out in the woods until silence covered the land once more in peaceful quiet.

Brothers and OlderSister!Reader

(I had been wanting to write Reader as a badass that wasn't a Mary Sue. Sorry if I failed.)

I could only stare at the five young men groveling before me, the attention I had been giving the thick book in my hands completely lost as the one dressed in the blue hoodie lifted his face from the floor.

"Please, sis...! You gotta help Choromatsu..." The demand became soft as his normally strong voice broke with fear, my eyes catching the tears brimming in his.

My heart stirred with his plea, a quick glance at the other four confirming that this wasn't another of their childhood pranks.

The sextuplet set had always been jokesters ever since they learned how to walk...but to see them in this wrecked state was more than they were capable of.

"You saw him last, Ichimatsu?" The book was quickly discarded, my feet guiding me from the common room where I had been lounging to the stairway. My brothers in the purple and red hoodies scrambled after me, following me all the way up to our parents' bedroom (where I was staying for my visit).

"Yeah..." Ichimatsu sounded nervous, his voice quivering a little, "I saw him...two days ago when he was heading out to a concert."

My brow furrowed as I ripped open the zipper to my duffel bag, revealing the civilian clothes that I had packed before I reached underneath to pull out a vacuum-sealed bag, "How did you find out he's missing?"

"A voicemail..." My brother in red spoke up sheepishly, his normally loud voice strangely quiet.

"Play it for me," The demand sent them running for the youngest's personal cell phone, giving me time to break the vacuum seal. I laid out everything that the bag held: my mesh and thermal skinsuits, the shadow armor shirt that held two ballistic plates, knee and shin guards that were slim enough to fit under any pants I wore, and a pair of knuckled gloves that I preferred to wear while on the job.

Slipping my current outfit off, I pulled the mesh skinsuit on and fully zipped it before my brothers were back with the phone.

They fumbled a little with the screen while I donned the armored shirt, an automated voice speaking quietly until they switched the call to speaker, "

This is a message to the Matsuno household. I represent a client that has been gracious enough to extend the loan pulled out in your name. The deadline for paying it back has passed. Pay the required amount in full or we will take further measures.

"

It was a male speaking, sounding between 40 and 50 years old. Someone used to doing this. Someone I was used to fighting against.

I had been hoping for a quiet vacation from my bodyguard work, but I underestimated how idiotic my little brothers could be.

"When did that call come in?" I tugged another shirt over the armored one, the striped design loud enough to mask the suspicious bumps from the plates. A pair of comfortable pants followed soon after.

"Uhh..." The eldest sextuplet tapped the screen a few times before the automated voice played again, "

Tuesday, May 9.

"

"Three days ago, then," With a final adjustment of my clothing, I ran my fingers through my longer hair before cinching it behind my head.

Osomatsu made way for me as I left our parents' room, both him and Ichimatsu following me downstairs while Jyushimatsu, Karamatsu, and Todomatsu waited for our return, "I'll see what I can do, but you should take this as a lesson in foolishness."

I met Osomatsu's eyes from over my shoulder, the oldest sextuplet flinching and breaking eye contact while my gaze narrowed. There was no need to ask who caused this to happen.

"Is there anything we can do to help?" Karamatsu asked, his face cleaned up from the tears.

"I don't want you guys to get more involved unnecessarily," I hummed as I sat on the lip of the mud room, dragging my boots over and loosening the laces, "I've got a pretty good idea of where to start...actually, Jyushimatsu."

The yellow-clad man jumped up at his name, shuffling towards the front door before leaning down to look at me.

"Care to play dress-up?"

"As who?"

"Moron number one."

"Hey!" Osomatsu shouted out in protest while Jyushimatsu laughed.

If I hadn't known the brothers as well as I did, Jyushimatsu could've easily fooled me. With his hair slightly ruffled up while toning down the smile he always wore, the man was the spitting image of Osomatsu.

Benefits of being identical

, I hummed in thought as we walked down the street towards the pachinko parlor that Osomatsu was known to frequent. A small part of me shuddered to think of how I managed to escape that trait in the family pool, the image translating into a light shiver in my body.

"Cold?" Jyushimatsu asked, his tone a little lower to match the eldest's.

"No, just a negative thought," I dismissed the concern, going through the plan again in my head.

Jyushimatsu was to bring me to the parlor and 'force' me to play some machines to make up for the money he had to borrow, while I had to play the naive 'friend' that only wanted to help. If there was a plant at the parlor, they would instantly pay attention to Jyushimatsu's appearance and keep tabs on him. I had given him instructions to flee back home after losing any tail he had from there on, the excitable fifth brother agreeing to the whole plan and apologizing in advance for what he'd say or do.

"This'll work," 'Osomatsu' stated confidently, his lips showing the signature smirk he wore, "It's your plan and, out of the seven of us, you have the most experience with this kind of stuff."

"I should be asking you idiots for payment."

"You won't be able to get anything out of us," He teased, "We've got years of blackmail."

"Ah, trying to use my yankee days against me?" I barely turned to look at him over my shoulder, a coy smile playing on my lips, "Look at you being brave."

"Learned it from you," 'Osomatsu' returned the look I was giving him. Both of us started laughing after a few silent moments, continuing to our destination.

"Shit..." 'Osomatsu' took a long drag from his cigarette and leaned away from the pachinko machine, shifting a glare towards me, "Give me what you've got. I know the next pull will be a winner."

I sheepishly shook my head, barely holding in a cough as the smoke wafted towards me, "But, my winnings aren't much. You need the money for

something else, right? Don't spend it all here."

He grabbed a fistful of small silver balls from an extra basket I had set aside as a 'bribe', something Jyushimatsu was supposed to 'take' from me if he thought someone was listening in on our conversation. It was the signal that I had been waiting for since we sat down two hours ago.

"You think I care?" Jyushimatsu played an annoyed Osomatsu very well, making me a little curious if he encountered that side of our brother, "I know you're loaded."

He shoved the stolen balls into the machine and played for a few more bets before finishing his cigarette, growling in distaste before snuffing out the smoldering butt in the provided ashtray. With a huff of smoke, Jyushimatsu pushed himself away from the machine and strode towards the entrance with no winnings.

I worriedly looked after him until the automatic sliding doors closed behind his frame, the sunlight blocking him from view. With a dejected moan, I turned my attention back to the machine and idly put a few more balls into the feed.

The familiar feeling of someone watching me prickled the back of my neck, withholding any visible reaction as someone roughly sat in the seat Jyushimatsu had been in. They wordlessly slipped a few balls into their machine before it blared in celebration, announcing the win to the parlor.

"Well, well...looks like he just got impatient."

"Who, my friend earlier?" A surprised expression settled on my face as I looked at the speaker, seeing a man confidently gathering his winnings from the tray and dumping them all into my 'bribe' basket, "Oh...! What are you doing?"

"Consider it a gift for dealing with his attitude. Saw the whole thing happen," He flipped out a cigarette pack and lighter, lighting a stick up before shoving the pack back into the pocket it came from, "I know his type."

"Ah..." I forced a blush to my face, inwardly groaning at the playboy act he was giving, "He's just...having a bad day."

"Seems like he's just using you to make money."

"Does it seem that way?" My hand hovered over the basket before picking up a few of the 'donated' winnings, the man smiling at the act. To those who weren't experienced, it signed an agreement that they couldn't get out of: monetary help from the stranger, "I'm not so good at these kinds of games."

As if to punctuate my ploy, the machine swallowed my next few bets.

"Ouch," The man laughed after a long drag, "Wanna play something easier?"

"There's an easier game?"

"Yeah!" Excitement spread across his face, like he was about to divulge a secret only he knew, "Games with little risk but large rewards."

I paused, intentionally hesitating before the man reached out and gently placed his hand on mine, mentally screaming at him to not touch me while an innocently-shocked expression rested on my features.

"I promise, you won't regret it."

"If...if you're sure," I took his lead, wiping off the feeling his hand left on the back of my shirt while I held my 'bribe' basket in the other arm.

Of the handful of people playing in the parlor, only two of them stood up shortly after we did and moved in the direction we were headed. Their normal prey would've been surprised at their sudden appearance behind them as we were corralled down a hallway that only offered three doors: two for the restrooms and one for the office. I was ushered through the office door and towards what seemed to be a closet behind the empty management desk, my suspicions growing as the first man opened the closet door to reveal a hidden room.

There were a few machines in the room, obviously broken down and beaten to hell.

The closet door closed behind the two men flanking me.

"Ready to play?"

"I-I don't understand," I stammered and frantically looked around, "You said there would be little risk!"

"For us."

The first attack was a dirty one, someone's fist colliding with the back of my head and causing me to stagger forward, dropping the balls all over the floor.

One step, I kept my balance while reaching behind me as my fingers made contact with the comforting metal nestled between my waistband and armored shirt. Two steps. Yanking out the concealed pistol, I flicked the safety off with a thumb and fired behind me.

The scream of pain confirmed the hit as I swung the weapon around to the man in front of me, his hulking figure charging towards me since the punch was thrown. With my deadly friend settled comfortably between my hands, I pulled the trigger as soon as the barrel lined up with the attacker's chest.

Ignoring the second confirmation, I swapped hands, continued the weapon's trajectory and slammed the butt of the pistol's magazine into the third man's temple, pivoting on my front leg to ensure I kept distance from him.

All three dropped on the floor, either rolling in agony or unconscious, within a minute.

"Little risk, big reward indeed," I couldn't hold back a smile as I bent down to pluck some balls from the floor.

The ascending staircase was easy to spot, sprinting up the steps two at a time until I got to the first landing, crouching down and waiting to hear anything within the opening that seemed to lead down another hallway. It

wasn't uncommon for gambling parlors to have a second floor, but this one seemed to be added as an afterthought.

Mentally, I was surprised that the two gunshots and cries of pain hadn't drawn any reinforcements, but my body never betrayed the thought.

Rolling the balls in my hand, I threw them towards the opposite wall of the hallway, refraining from making any noise while listening closely. There had been no verbal reaction to the sudden noise, a mental countdown sounding in my head before I suddenly rounded the corner and aimed my pistol down its length.

A swift kick nearly knocked it out of my hands, my eyes focusing on the gunmetal positioning itself to aim at my head. Jabbing at the gun with my elbow, I abandoned my weapon and threw an immediate punch towards the stealthy attacker, catching them off-guard. They coughed out a breath and I followed their body, throwing more jabs towards their sternum and throat, catching the bulb of their throat with the palm of my hand.

A metallic 'clank' was heard as they dropped the offending weapon, reaching up to their throat with both hands.

I attempted to take the opening before the edge of a knife neatly sliced open the shirt front and danced along my clavicle, taking a step back to gain distance and recover. I hadn't counted on there being two ambushers, a mistake I hadn't made in a while.

A woman around my age stepped between myself and the choking man, fury written all over her face as she stabbed again and again at my body. There were a few nicks scratched across my neck and arms as both of us weaved within the deadly dance, the knife finally burying itself high within my left shoulder as I took the risk, stepping forward and connecting a solid hit to her throat.

The man had recovered enough to try and reach for his weapon again, my fingers yanking the new blade from its wound before flinging it towards him. It buried itself deep into his wrist, drawing a scream while I unleashed blow after blow to his head.

"Well, well," A voice sounded out from further in the hallway, the tone marking it as the man who had left my brothers the voicemail, "This has been quite the show."

Turning my attention behind me, I slowly raised my hands above my head when I saw a rather large revolver aimed at me. The man who held it was the slimy sort: overly waxed hair that was slicked back with a comb into a style that was reminiscent of the old gangs, an unlit cigarette dangling between his smile, a brown checkered business suit that appeared to be freshly pressed with matching penny loafers...a pair of eyes that warned of how deadly he was.

"How kind of you to visit my place of business," His tone didn't hold an ounce of sincerity, "To whom do I owe the pleasure?"

"Freelancer."

"Ah, a hired gun, then," With a quick flick of his wrist, the revolver sounded out a shot. I could feel the pressure wave hit my left knee and inwardly frowned.

He had missed on purpose

, "Whose purse holds your strings?"

"Not sure," I shrugged with a little effort, feeling the blood ebb down my chest as my shoulder continued to bleed freely, "I don't ask questions."

"Then you're a smart woman," The heels of his shoes clacked against the floor, his slow methodical steps bringing him within spitting distance, "Tell me something."

I remained silent as he continued closer, lifting the revolver as he did until its muzzle touched the knife wound. I didn't let the painful sting of gunpowder and residual heat show.

"The purse that pays for you to stand there...does it have many colors?"

I raised an eyebrow in confusion, rage boiling within my gut as too many puzzle pieces locked into place from a decades old mystery.

Tougou.

The older man before me was the very same man that caused my career path to change with every intention of protecting my brothers, all as an apology for not being there when this scum had threatened them. He had been especially fascinated with Osomatsu ever since he had caught Tougou stealing while lodging with our family.

"I mean...it was tanned leather."

The answer drew a disdained look, one I relished, before the revolver was shoved into the wound, "Do not test me."

"Dude, I'm not lying. What do I have to gain?" I gritted my teeth, "My client told me to get the money back they lost. One of your underlings promised a full return, but attacked me instead. I simply defended myself."

"Oh...?" Tougou's tone signaled that he didn't buy the excuse, "How much had your payer lost?"

"A few thousand."

The revolver went off, my body rocking back from the point-blank gunshot as I yelled out in pain, pressing a hand over the larger hole as hard as I could.

"Your face...it's very familiar."

I silently cursed my genetics, knowing that it was the one thing I couldn't mask fully. Slightly slouched forward to keep the blood from flowing down my back, I kept my feet while looking back at Tougou.

"Yours is ugly."

His eyes flared as he aimed the revolver at my head, the distance only two feet away, "You have one more chance, hired gun. Who hired you?"

"You shot me!" I yelled back, "Like hell I'm gonna tell you!"

Both Tougou and I paused when a muffled shout sounded down the hallway, a wide smile spreading on his face while mine grimaced in disbelief: someone had called my name.

As his focus shifted back to me, I bull-rushed him and shoved the revolver towards the ceiling with my left hand, ensuring that it couldn't be used against me. Tougou wasn't expecting the move, his eyes widening in surprise while my index finger jammed itself between the trigger and wall before his free hand moved to shove my head aside. We struggled in a tug-of-war over the revolver, his hand firmly planted against my right cheek as I struggled to keep eye contact with the revolver.

"To think!" Tougou shouted in glee, "They sent their sister to handle their dirty business!"

I heard the 'tic' of my boot tapping metal as I faltered backwards, the man nearly pushing me to the hallway entrance. Releasing my hold on the revolver and shoving him away from me, I quickly ducked down to grab my abandoned pistol and leveled it with his chest.

No second chances.

The pistol rang out four times, jamming on the fifth before I discarded the useless thing and rushing towards a staggering Tougou. My hands grabbed the shoulders of his suit jacket and pulled him close, slamming my forehead into his face. As he fell over, I swiped the revolver now loose in his grip before correcting my hold and aiming down at him.

My chest heaved with exertion, the tunnel vision finally lifting as I gathered myself.

Tougou lay dead beneath my feet, each round piercing his chest. His nose was crunched against his face, clearly broken and bleeding.

Blinking away the blood trickling down my brow, I ejected the shells from the revolver and tossed it aside, wiping my hands of the thing on my pants

as I staggered forward towards where I had heard the call of my name.

A banging could be heard, the hollow thud repeating until I stood in front of a door that looked freshly installed and painted. Turning the handle with some hope, I kicked at the door when I found the knob locked, my boot connecting solidly with the wood and splintering it from the frame.

"You..." I started, entering the room before the dust could settle, "Asshole, I'm gonna make you pay for my hospital bill."

Chained to the wall while plastic zip ties acted as handcuffs, a cloth gag wrapped around his eyes, slumped a battered and bruised Choromatsu. The regret he had carried was cast away as he heard me speak, "Sis! Oh my God, I'm so sorry!"

I gently removed the blindfold before focusing on the zip ties, instructing him to clasp his hands together and push his wrists apart as hard as he could before adding my own strength. The plastic snapped cleanly and he wrapped his arms around my neck, bringing me close for a hug regardless of the blood.

"How are the others? Are they okay?"

"Worried about you," I took a deep breath before standing up, grabbing Choromatsu's arms and hauling my brother over my shoulders. It was a struggle to stand on my feet, but he needed to be checked out by a doctor and the closest hospital was quite a few blocks away, "Keep still."

He nodded and I retraced my steps out of the building, using the back exit instead of the main front doors.

Mafia!Brothers and Hitman!Reader

"We need to finish this quickly!" Osomatsu yelled over the gunfire, ducking behind a thick concrete wall before hearing the faint 'click' of a magazine being released from the well. Swinging his firing arm and shoulder around cover, he narrowed in on the rival gunner and pulled the trigger twice before hiding from a fresh stream of bullets.

"Four more!" A call responded to his cry, the lower voice identifying the speaker as Karamatsu. Another sporadic round of gunfire sounded to Osomatsu's left, the eldest quickly glancing around cover to find the machine gunner dead against the tripod of his weapon, darting towards more cover within the raided mansion.

The faint moonlight streamed through the large bay windows lining the hallway Osomatsu ducked into, a swear falling from his lips as he stood within the windowframe's shadow. He

hated

bay windows.

Sucking in a breath, he held his pistol close and ran as fast as he could towards the other end of the hall, each step mimicking his heartbeat.

Ten feet left.

Five feet.

Pain blossomed through his left shoulder, the momentum from the sudden attack sending Osomatsu spiraling to the ground within the shadow of the hall corner, "Fuck...! Sniper! West hall by moonset!"

"You hit?" He heard Todomatsu's high-pitched voice call out from some nearby room, the gunfire suddenly dying down as the warning rippled through the invading forces.

"Yeah...Ichimatsu, take them out," Ripping off his black suit jacket, Osomatsu tore off the blood-splattered sleeve and cinched it tight around his shoulder using his teeth and right hand. He heard the shuffle of fabric before seeing the fourth sextuplet inch close, the dark gray hooded jacket covering the bright purple shirt underneath, "Ichimatsu?"

"Couldn't get into position. Top floor was flooded with men," The family doctor grabbed Osomatsu's healthy shoulder and dragged him further away from the window, pushing him against a wall and pulling out a white syringe-like container filled with a clear green liquid, "Bite."

He had only offered a roll of sock to Osomatsu, who gripped the fabric between his teeth before shoving the pointed end of the container into the bullet wound. The pain was excruciating, but they both knew it was better than bleeding out from a bullet wound.

With the injected liquid now hardening into a semi-solid gel, Osomatsu spat the fabric out, "What's the situation?"

"Pinned by two snipers. Best bet is hiring," Ichimatsu was intentionally short. No wasted breath, no useless info.

"Totty! Get your contact on the line!" The family head shouted the order, an acknowledgement heard from just a few feet away, "Get the closest one here. I don't care about price."

Todomatsu appeared next to the two bloodied men, his appearance much cleaner than the other brothers -- near pristine in the environment. His knives rested in their belt sheaths, the only sign of their use being the fasteners were unsnapped, "There's a hitman in the area. They only stated to bunker."

"Bunker? In here? Hope they're not gonna take all night," Osomatsu groaned, leaning his head against the wall for a moment. Rolling his injured

shoulder to test the pain levels, he braced himself against the wall as he stood up, "Finish off any stragglers and gather what information you can from their database. We need to find out which gang hired these assholes to mess with us."

Osomatsu had moved to the closest infirmary the raided mansion had, sitting on the metal table within the room that had no windows while Ichimatsu finished suturing the wound. He eyed the ruined red-dyed long sleeve shirt that lay discarded on the floor, his bare chest open to the elements.

It was one of his favorite shirts.

"...you're mourning that?" The fourth sextuplet had followed his gaze.

"It will be missed."

The last few strands of thread were snipped, the doctor collecting the useful items and tools into a bag before lifting it underneath his arm, "You've got a wardrobe full of them at home."

"But

that

one was really soft."

"Then buy another."

"I just got the 'all clear' message from the hired help," Todomatsu waved his phone a little as he walked through the door, pausing only to raise an eyebrow at Osomatsu's wardrobe change, "We...are good to leave."

"How long was that?" Osomatsu shrugged the injured shoulder, standing up and gathering the crumpled shirt at Todomatsu's feet.

"Three hours, give or take. They were thorough, even leaving a gift at the front door."

"Gift?" It was the eldest's turn to raise an eyebrow, following the youngest out to the front veranda and staring at the 'gift'.

A steel briefcase stood alone outside the front door, completely polished clean and devoid of any fingerprints, the leather-wrapped handle resting on top. Osomatsu lifted the case up and held it flat in his hands before opening both clasps, noting that neither were locked.

Inside was a manilla folder that had been paperclipped shut to prevent the contents from spilling out, as well as a handkerchief tied into a knot. He handed the folder to Todomatsu, taking the handkerchief for himself and letting Ichimatsu analyze the briefcase.

"Contact info, public pictures..." Todomatsu rattled off what was in the folder, the rustling of papers not distracting Osomatsu from undoing the knotted handkerchief, "Hell, there's even a copy of the contract for your hit. It's signed by Dekapan."

"Then we'll need to pay him a visit soon," The rattling in the now-loosen kerchief grabbed the three sextuplets' attention, Osomatsu lifting the final corner to reveal four objects. Rather, two pairs of objects.

Todomatsu began retching, throwing the paperwork at Ichimatsu before turning away and hunching over. The doctor took the paperwork in hand, his focus on the egg-white color of the first object pair.

"Oh, that's gross," Osomatsu thumbed the triangular shapes, catching the forward lean of Ichimatsu out of the corner of his eye and turning so that they could both look more easily, "What is it?"

"Easy answer?" Ichimatsu deftly picked up both objects in his free hand, his fingers gently pressing them together, "Human vertebrae."

The briefcase was lowered as he began playing with the identified bones, turning them over in both of his hands as the fourth brother became more interested in the presumed calling card of the hitman. Each bone had been cleaned, although not entirely.

"Detailed answer: these are the lower vertebrae of the cervical section, C5 and C6. The only way to really gain access to these is by beheading."

The gagging from Todomatsu renewed, the sound barely distracting the other two from the discovery.

"So our hitman decapitated theirs?" Osomatsu held aloft the other objects, the black metal glinting in the light from the front door, "Looks like they 'decapitated' the weapon, too."

The phrasing drew Ichimatsu's attention, seeing the loose pieces that both were familiar with.

"The trigger and sear? Can you tell which model they came from?"

"Not with just these two parts," Osomatsu shook his head briefly, "Regardless, it doesn't look like that guy or gun will be bothering us anymore."

He took the bones from Ichimatsu and dropped them back into the kerchief, tying it back up before shoving it into his pocket, "Let's head home and rest."

"Totty."

The youngest sextuplet merely glanced up from his paperwork scattered over his desk, the pen never stopping its movement.

"...do you know who that was?"

"No, Ichimatsu," Todomatsu sighed as he looked back to what he was writing on, holding a sheet close to his face before setting it aside on a neatly stacked pile of paper, "They wished to remain anonymous, accepting our payment through an overseas account."

The fourth brother stood outside the open office door, adjusting the weight of the rather large case slung over his shoulder, "Not even how we wanted

the person dealt with?"

The pen was placed on the desk, an annoyed eye roll greeting the family doctor, "No. I only told them where the shot had come from, our current position, and how much we were willing to pay when they agreed to the hit."

Ichimatsu's eyes hooded, taking strides towards the front door as his mind became lost in the unknown details: their hired help had taken care of a sniper with only two pieces of information, both reflecting

direction

.

Ichimatsu gave the personal driver a destination, one well known to the man. The drive itself was mundane, the windows thick enough to repel bullets and dark enough to hide the passenger's identity. Considering the failed hit two weeks ago, Ichimatsu wouldn't have been surprised if someone tried again so soon.

His eyes closed as the sun streamed through the tinted windows, his right hand curling up and acting as a perch for his chin while his left hand rested on the hardshell case laying on the bench seat. A small bubble of envy rose in Ichimatsu's chest, replaying the dire scenario again in his head as he thought of what he'd be able to do should the second floor not have been occupied.

The rifle cracked out its shot, the stock rocking into Ichimatsu's shoulder before his instinct kicked in, quickly ejecting the empty casing from the chamber while the magazine pushed a readied cartridge into position. The bolt-action lever snapped back into place, his right hand propping up the stock back into his shoulder as he eyed the target down range through his scope.

Just an inch to the left of the paper target's heart, bordering the thick black line dividing the two point zones.

Another shot rang out to his right, the sound almost comforting to hear.

Ichimatsu's eye wandered to the shooter, the lithe feminine body laying on the ground in the same position he was in. Her hair was tied back, the loose strands safely tucked underneath a black ballcap as the bill barely touched the scope of the rifle she was using. A desert tan long-sleeved shirt covered her torso and arms, the hem tightly cinched under the waistline of the semi-baggy black cargo pants.

Ichimatsu noted the absence of hearing protection muffs, an intrigued smile tugging at his lips as he continued to watch her from over the rim of his own scope.

"You'll get a better view from behind."

His eyes quickly darted back to his own target, "Just thought it was interesting to see you not wear the muffs."

"Neither are you," She quipped, raising her hand to barely nudge one of the dials on her scope.

"Seems so," He did the same, readjusting his position and squeezing the trigger after a few steady breaths. The reload motion was just as rapid as the first.

Overadjusted.

He touched the dial again in the opposite direction.

"Your reload betrays your experience."

Ichimatsu huffed out a small grunt, "Your observation betrays yours."

"That's fine," Her rifle sounded another shot, the bolt-action clearing a few times before Ichimatsu heard the magazine slide from the well. He lifted his head up and caught her glance as she switched the rifle's safety on before sitting up, resting her back against the wooden bench behind the shooting line.

Two hardshell cases sat on the bench directly behind her, one unlocked while the other remained shut underneath it.

"Switching?"

The woman looked along his line of sight, letting out an amused scoff, "Last time that one saw action, someone died."

Ichimatsu felt his pulse thunder in his ears, watching the sniper meticulously begin to pack the prone rifle away. Despite the few cartridges still left in his own magazine, he began following her actions, wiping down the rifle and detaching the bipods.

This woman had his complete attention, a feeling swelling in his gut that something about her was familiar.

He had only managed to close his rifle hardshell case when she slung both of hers over her shoulder, the double weight not seeming to phase her in the slightest, "Need help?"

"No thanks. They cry if they're away from mom," The woman gave a small wave, her height shorter than Ichimatsu expected as marked by the case lengths themselves. The two 53-inch cases measured from her head to her knees.

Ichimatsu paused, his thumbs barely pressing down on the hinge locks as he watched the woman leave. He was too obvious in his mannerisms, the locks clicking into place as he let out a heavy sigh.

Normally, he'd be able to sense someone's intentions...but with her, she was the one reading him.

He lifted the range's binoculars, aimed at her paper target set to the same distance as his. Three holes dead center of the target's heart.

"...bitch," A playful smirk rested on his lips as he lowered the binoculars back into place. The sniper didn't need to adjust; she was messing with him nearly the whole time.

Todomatsu staggered through the door, yelling in pain as some of their men slammed the heavy wooden entry shut, "No one leaves!"

"Shit," Osomatsu had ducked his head into the front room, rushing over when Todomatsu staggered to the ground with his left hand pressing hard against his side, "How many?"

"I...don't know," The youngest stammered, his body beginning to shake as Ichimatsu slid to a stop next to him, his fingers prying Todomatsu's away from the wound before applying pressure with clean gauze, "Bodyguard fell as I was shot..."

"Two...?" Karamatsu asked from the main stairway landing, the position not in view of any windows, "What about the back entry?"

"I wouldn't count on it," A yellow-vested man commented, his right arm spotted with blood as the red color stained the damaged white sleeve of his shirt, "Squad on nearly every door. They must've moved right after the shots."

"Coordinated, then," Osomatsu clicked his tongue against his cheek, looking down at the doctor tending to Todomatsu's wound, "Patch him up before going to the nest. I need your eyes."

Ichimatsu only nodded, instructing the youngest brother to press on the now-bloodied gauze before picking him up and bringing him to the basement where the surgical ward was.

This scenario...it had happened before:

"Surrounded on all sides," A younger Ichimatsu gritted his teeth, his fingers trembling as he fastened the scope to the rifle's rails, "Fuck today."

"It could be worse," A young woman barely out of her teenage years smiled, her rifle ready for action, "We've got a good vantage point in the attic,

and

there are pillows!"

The heavy weapon rested gently in the crook of her elbow as she held it like a child, the muzzle not touching the wall while she walked up the steep staircase to the aforementioned attic.

"Do we even know where we're looking?" He groaned, slinging the newly purchased rifle over his shoulder as he followed her up, "Those snipers could be hiding anywhere."

"Four eyes are better than two," She hummed, flicking the hallway light off before slowly opening the attic door and crouching low. Ichimatsu followed her movements inside and gently shut the door behind them, "Take the north?"

He glanced at the mentioned view, the small venting window already open, "...right."

Both of them fell silent as they scoped out their field of view, the soft click from her rifle indicating that she had found her target and switched the weapon off safety. Ichimatsu's heart thundered in his ears as he struggled to not rush his scouting, taking in slow breaths and steadying his hand.

A short flash from a reflection, his eye straining to pick out any detail as he stilled. The young sniper stayed motionless, knowing that any move would spell the end.

Seconds dragged to minutes.

Moonlight shifted within the spot he had been staring at, the action indicating his target. The rifle found its home against his shoulder, his feet planting against hers for support as they lay in opposing directions.

Safety was turned off, the click soft in the dead silence.

Both snipers knew that the men downstairs were waiting for their gunshot to advance, signaling the start to a hopefully quick battle without the enemy sniper's support.

A twitch from her foot, the signal to count down from five.

Four.

Three.

Two.

One.

'Crack!' went her rifle, his finger twitching in strain before he fully pulled it.

Ichimatsu swore as he rolled from sight, his rifle laying on his chest, "I missed...I missed...!"

A sharp gunshot from outside, a metallic screech, a strangled cry from her.

"(Y/n)!" He recoiled, nearly throwing the M24 off of him as he watched the young woman swing completely around with her heavy rifle. The reflection of the blood began to pool around her right calf, the angle perfect for where his center mass had been, "Fuck, I'm so sor--"

She shoved him away as she settled into his previous position, aligning with something she saw and pulling the trigger twice.

"Ah...goddammit..." (Y/n) sucked a strained breath through her teeth as she released the bulky AWM from her grip, her hands reaching down and finally pressing on the wide gunshot wound, "Dammit...!"

"Here," Ichimatsu removed the dark jacket from his shoulders, wadding it into a ball and pressing down on the spot. His heart hurt at the strangled sound she made, her body not moving an inch despite the pain, "I got too cocky..."

"It happens to the best of us, Ichimatsu," Her voice was thick with exertion, the next inhale racked with sobs, "Boss is gonna have our heads...but at least we're alive to get the tonguelashing."

He tried to laugh with her, biting his bottom lip in frustration. He, the fuck-up brother, could've gotten her killed. Hell, she could still die from this wound.

"...can we have light?"

"I shouldn't move" was her response.

Ichimatsu scrambled up, flicking on the attic light and pulling out the emergency first aid kit from his rifle bag outside the door. Quickly threading the surgical thread through the eye, his now-steady hands gently lifted the jacket from the wound.

A large gaping bullet entry greeted him, the skin torn off around the edges and exposing the thin layer of fat and coiled muscle underneath. The actual puncture wound traveled deeper through the muscle, blood flowing from the drill-like tunnel. The flow told Ichimatsu all he needed to know.

"No artery hit," He rolled up his sleeves and began suturing the muscles together, blood coating his hands in milliseconds, "Staunch the exit."

She followed his direction, shoving his jacket underneath her leg and visibly wincing as the cloth touched her skin. Ichimatsu resumed his stitching.

"...how did you find him so quickly?" He had to keep her talking, keep monitoring her conscious levels.

"Looked where the hole was aimed, lowered my angle by one degree, and I saw the rifle pointing up in the air," (Y/n) rested her head against the floor, remaining on her belly as Ichimatsu worked, "First shot hit the rifle, second his chest."

"I envy you," He confessed as he closed the stitch, beginning on the secondary suture along her skin, "You've always been really good with the AWM..."

"It's my baby," She laughed a little, lifting up an arm to cover her eyes, "I consider it a part of me."

"What, would it cry without you?"

The broad amused smile on her lips drew a pleased hum from him, "Maybe."

They stood in front of the family boss, the old man snarling down at them. Behind him lay the dead of both enemy and ally, the medics tending to those still clinging to life.

"Their blood is on your hands," His words drew spittle from his mouth, "For each one of ours dead, you'll be lashed."

"Sir," (Y/n) stepped forward, her injured leg wrapped tightly in a fresh bandage that Ichimatsu had applied from the surgical ward, "The fault is mine alone. Ichimatsu hit his target; I did not."

The fifth brother's eyes went wide, sweeping towards (y/n) before tracking to his brothers behind the boss as they tended to the wounded. They all shared the same fearful expression.

"Matsuno, how many do we have?" The boss' eyes narrowed viciously, stepping forward to meet her in the challenge while holding out an open hand towards his right. A dented metal bat -- stained with old blood, viscera, and acid -- was offered by the family head's right-hand man.

Osomatsu swallowed thickly, "Uh...ten, sir."

"Fifteen," A medic quickly corrected, the oldest brother earning a glare from the boss. He repeated the medic's answer quietly.

"When I start, count out the new bodies."

(Y/n) stood resolutely as the bat was lifted high above the man's head, crashing down full force on her right shoulder.

She stood.

Another blow on the shoulder before it switched to her dominant arm, a crunch echoing out as she muffled a shout of pain. The bat slowly made its

way to her stomach, her waist, her left leg.

Still, (y/n) stood...until the weapon found purchase on her left leg, the soft 'thwunk' sending her to the ground in agony. White gauze quickly turned red.

"Seventeen, sir," Osomatsu was forced to call out the new number given by the medics. The brothers prayed that no more died.

Seven, eight blows.

The boss wasn't pleased with the body hits anymore, quickly aiming up and grinning widely as the bat connected solidly with (y/n)'s head. Her body snapped back from its groveling position, naturally following through with the blow and exposing her face to the weapon.

Eleven, twelve.

Her nose had crunched under the blunt object, an ear torn by the jagged dent. It felt like hours before (y/n) lifted her hands to her face in a desperate effort to protect what she could, the brothers watching on in horror as the boss aimed for the gunshot wound once more.

Thirteen, fourteen.

The gauze was wrapped securely, but the bat hammered through the padding that Ichimatsu had stuffed into and around the wound, his foresight failing to tell him how much punishment (y/n) would be given.

Fifteen, sixteen.

Back to her chest, banging near her sternum with some clear intention to break her collarbone. The boss didn't want her to hold a weapon again.

Seventeen.

With the last swing pulling away from her right arm, the room went silent.

Ichimatsu stared helplessly at (y/n)'s body, unsure if she was still alive.

"Let that be a warning to you lot," The boss spat out, his glare turning towards the sextuplets, "In this family, you either give perfection or you get killed."

Karamatsu and Jyushimatsu had subtly restrained Ichimatsu before he could rush over to her, tears beginning to fall from their eyes as a medic knelt by her side.

Ichimatsu snipped the extra suture thread, glancing over to Todomatsu's face as the youngest clenched his teeth, "Where were you shot at?"

"The south terrace...walking towards the house," Todomatsu sat up when he was cleared to move, gingerly placing his feet on the ground first.

"...how fitting. I'm going to need backup," Ichimatsu slipped off his lab coat, ripping off the bloodied nitrile gloves before pushing open the main surgical ward doors.

"Where did you want Choromatsu positioned?" The pink-shirted brother raised his phone to his face.

"Not Choromatsu. The hitman from before."

"Why? They're probably not in the area anymore!" He shouted after the doctor. Silence was the response as the doors swung closed, "Asshole."

The fourth sextuplet viciously opened the hardshell case containing his sniper rifle, his hands meticulously assembling the M24 that had been with him since the beginning of his mafia career. Tightening the scope into place, he loaded the magazine and locked it into the well, taking in a slow breath before flicking off the stairway light leading up to the attic -- the same attic that (y/n) had been shot in.

Slowly closing the door behind him, Ichimatsu settled into position facing southward, cautiously lifting the M24 against his shoulder as he looked through the scope in the direction Todomatsu was possibly shot from.

The cityline greeted his left eye, taking a broad sweep of the flat building tops before seeing a blitz of motion that caught his attention, pivoting his scope towards it and glaring through the magnification with his right gaze.

Another M24 -- this one painted black and gray -- aimed at the Matsuno family mansion, Ichimatsu's finger lightly resting on the trigger as the person wielding the weapon came more into focus. A male, his physique betrayed by the broad shoulders partially hidden beneath the loosely wrapped black scarf, barely hunkered down more as Ichimatsu regarded the sniper, his eyes barely narrowing. Someone else's hand lifted up and tapped the enemy on the shoulder, drawing the other man's attention before a glint of metal slid into his throat.

The M24 dropped from the enemy's hands, the weapon pulled off the lip of the building's edge before a slender black cylinder slipped into view on the neighboring edge. The cylinder narrowed further into a rifle barrel that rested on a bipod, a pale slender hand adjusting one of the knobs before pulling back and nearly caressing the metal body of the rifle as it deftly tucked underneath the stock.

Ichimatsu could hear his heartbeat in his ears, instantly recognizing the weapon itself and the person wielding it.

The woman from the range.

(Y/n).

Her black ballcap rested deep over her eyes as she settled into position, training the weapon across the horizon to Ichimatsu's left. The tan shirt had been swapped for a dark gray long-sleeved shirt, most of the fabric protected by a black tac vest with a few pouches already open. Her colored hair had been pulled tight behind her head in a braid, its length disappearing behind her left shoulder as she leaned forward a little more.

The rifle in her grip was not the one she had used on the range.

The beast she used now was the one that saved their lives years ago, the same one that she refused to bring out at the range. Her AWM.

His focus remained on (y/n), his index finger never leaving the trigger.

She wasn't an enemy, but she was counting on him to be her cover.

A muted flash from the AWM's muzzle, a soft whip crack from the distance. (Y/n) barely budged from the recoil before she pulled her head away from the scope, and Ichimatsu squeezed the trigger while his crosshairs rested on someone approaching to her right. His rifle kicked into his shoulder, the bullet sent flying and slamming into the person's left shoulder.

Ichimatsu sneered in victory as he briefly saw the open tunnel in the fleshy cavity before the person fell backwards from the bullet's momentum, instantly reloading his rifle and steadying his aim for another chance.

(Y/n) pounced on the wounded, a knife dancing in her hands while Ichimatsu took another shot at the small crowd beginning to stream near the rooftop's edge. The handful of people moved too close to her for the brother to continue covering her, a swear falling from his lips as he emptied the chamber.

He could only watch and hope that another chance presented itself.

(Y/n)'s cap was pulled from her head, revealing more of her face to Ichimatsu's scope. She was snarling, her expression like a wild animal unleashed among its prey. Her knife buried itself deep into flesh with every swing, cuts and welts sprouting from where she had been hit by hand, brass knuckle, or blade.

Ichimatsu's eyes widened as he watched someone grab her braid, pulling harshly backwards and dragging her down and out of sight of the sniper. He held his breath, prepared to fire when a target presented itself.

Five seconds, a minute passed without any indication that there was a victor of the brawl on the rooftop.

He released the breath he held, slowly taking another one in as he readjusted the finger on the trigger, "...come on, (y/n)..."

His cellphone buzzing in his pocket barely drew his attention away from the empty scene in the scope, another insistent vibration drawing his ire as his eyes wandered to his phone that he pulled out of his pocket.

<<

17:12 – We're counting on you.

>>

<<

18:34 – Oy, hot shot. What the fuck?

>>

<<

19:29 – What the hell is going on up there?!

>>

<<

19:49 – If you're dead, we're dividing up your shit.

>>

The messages from Osomatsu didn't need context. Ichimatsu gritted his teeth, thumbing a response before checking his scope once more. He hadn't realized that two hours had passed since he settled into position, laying the M24 flat on the ground and emptying the chamber before sliding the magazine out.

Crawling out of the attic while closing the door behind him once more, Ichimatsu slammed his head against the wall, growling loudly in frustration at the entire situation. He had been able to viably help (y/n), even firing a few times to take down those that she couldn't defend against...but he still felt like he had failed.

"Whoa, what's going on?" Jyushimatsu's eyes widened as he looked towards Ichimatsu, partially crouched down on the stairway, "You were really quiet..."

"Just...stay bunkered," The sniper gritted his teeth while disassembling his rifle setup, nearly throwing down the scope into the fitted foam in anger, "I don't know if they're all dead."

"The snipers?" The surprise was obvious in the younger's tone, "You missed?"

"I didn't."

The reply was sharp.

"Then...why bunker?"

"I don't know if the hired contact was able to take care of their targets," With a solid 'thud', Ichimatsu closed the rifle's hardshell case, his left hand resting on the rough texture for a moment more, "They got more involved than I thought they would."

"Oh, fistfight?"

"Not sure."

"Jyushi!" A sudden shout from the bottom of the spiraling staircase snapped their attention downwards, "Back door!"

The brawler of the mafia family raced down the stairs, the sniper following shortly with his rifle case.

"What is it?" Jyushimatsu asked Osomatsu, the oldest cocking one of his pistols while joining their rush towards the back door.

"Perimeter alarm went off and the cameras have only caught one person walking towards the mansion," His top lip pulled into a snarl, "They're either brave or stupid."

"Sounds stupid," The younger laughed as he slid a pair of brass knuckles around his fingers, "One person won't give me much of a fight."

"You're giving him back up," The order was directed toward Ichimatsu, a hum his only response while he grabbed one of the assault rifles their forces used, "Use one of the side windows."

Ichimatsu ducked from the rear hallway into a room a few doors down, pressing against the wall closest to the back door while moving towards the side-sliding window. Uncovering the scope's lens, he partially leaned forward enough to have the barrel clear the track and lowered his eye to the viewing lens.

The flash of colored hair underneath the bloodstains sent a chill down his spine, the person's gaze fixated on the door before sweeping towards him.

What once held a predatory glare now appeared to be friendly.

(Y/n)

.

Two metallic briefcases were held in her hands, her stride never faltering despite the bloodied shoeprints left in her wake. The black outfit excelled in hiding blood, the only proof of her being in a physical fight evident by the blood spatter across her arms and face. The welts had swollen into bruises, cuts left to dry.

"(Y/n)!" Ichimatsu shouted from the window, dropping the rifle and rushing back towards the back door. The sudden realization swept through the personnel standing at the ready, the other sextuplets standing slack in awe as Ichimatsu opened the door wide. He rushed out, quickly followed by his brothers, and forced her to drop the briefcases as he encompassed her arms in a hug.

Her voice was tired but resolute as she laughed a little, her lithe frame nearly shaking in Ichimatsu's hold, "...Didn't mean to be gone so long, but I'm back."

"Welcome home," The Matsunos spoke as one, each of them joining in the group hug.

--Mature-- Prison!Brothers and Innocent!Reader

WARNING! This is a mature chapter, and meant for an 18+ audience. If you're younger than that, I respectfully ask that you find something else to read.

If you're older than 18, you may continue at your own discretion.

This story contains violence, drug use/abuse, nonconsensual sex scenes (male to male/male to female), incest, gore, and torture.

This is my darkest one-shot as of June 26, 2021. Please do not read if any of the previous warnings do not sit well with you.

My name is number 4587 -- I mean (y/n) (l/n). I'm writing this journal to tell the world what happened to myself and a few others while hidden away from the eyes of the regulated medical field, stored in an office building that was furbished for torture. I want to get the others help and I need help myself.

Please, read this and tell someone who can do something about this!

I could only stare in shock at the sight before my eyes, my hands clenched tightly as the nails dug into the sweaty flesh of my palms.

This wasn't happening...this

couldn't

be happening!

"Move."

The simple command was barely uttered before I was shoved towards the small armored bus, the metal cuffs around my ankles jangling and prohibiting much movement as I staggered forward to rejoin the few people waiting to board the bus. The three others in front of me barely glanced back, the rearmost one standing firm when I accidentally bumped into his shoulder. Uttering a soft apology as I straightened out, he didn't respond to anything I had said as his focus snapped back forward when someone walked up in front of the line.

The three men forming the 'line' in front grew unsettled, a thought forming in my mind that they knew this person from their part of the prison. I had never seen him before now, as I was housed with the other women.

"You four have been chosen to participate in a new project that the government is wanting to roll out within the next year or so," The man started speaking, his harsh blue eyes settling on every prisoner in front of him, including myself, "Your life sentences may be shortened based on your performance there and the people that will be accompanying you are the best in their field."

I lowered my eyes, knowing full well that I wasn't supposed to be here in the first place.

I was judged with a life sentence without parole, accused of a string of murders that I never committed...but evidence had been falsified, presented to the court during my long trial and the jury unanimously agreed that I was the one who killed seven people in horrible ways.

So much for a fair trial.

"You may be asking your worthless selves: 'Why me? Why not the guys on death row?' The answer to that is simple, dumbasses," The man sneered down at the four of us, "They're protected by certain laws and you peons are not."

"You can't deny us our rights, asshole!" One of the prisoners shouted out, a guard instantly stepping up and grabbing a fistful of hair, shoving him to the

ground. The rest of us backed away as the prisoner struggled against the guard before another two guards jumped in and restrained him further.

"You forfeited those when you slaughtered innocents, 4981," The man standing in front spoke calmly as he watched the brutality unfold. He finally directed his attention to the rest of us, "Any other questions?"

No one spoke up.

"Get on."

The command had no give and we shuffled onto the bus, my eyes catching the furious gaze of the man still on the ground as I passed. His dark hues held such animosity as I could barely see a red glint deep within the dark color, his mouth gagged with some kind of rough-looking cloth as the guards grabbed at his prison clothes, completely picking him up and shoving him onto the bus after I had found a seat away from the others.

The violent prisoner was shoved into a seat towards the back, the metallic sounds of cuffs and chains echoing out while we refused to look and see what was happening, keeping our attention straight ahead for fear of being reprimanded.

When the guards filed off of the bus after locking us all to the interior side to keep us in our chosen seats, the man who spoke to us boarded and leaned over to whisper something into the driver's ear, opening the bulletproof partition for a moment before locking it back up to keep the driver safe from the criminals. He cleared his throat and looked back at us.

"I forgot to mention one thing," He offered a mocking smile of apology, "The guards there are the law, so I'd follow their directions better than you do ours if you don't want to come back as a sniffling pile of flesh."

I tried to withhold my reaction, clenching my fists tighter as the cuffs around my wrists started to bite into my skin. Why was I the only female getting sent to this place? There were plenty of other life-servers who had been at the prison for much longer than me.

The door to the bus closed when the man stepped off, the engine turning over before it began to pull away from the prison that I had called 'home' for a few months.

The drive was long and boring, the busy city roadways turning into smaller roads before devolving into a poorly paved driveway through a long unbroken stretch of grass and trees. I had given up on trying to find something to look at through the bars of the bus windows, switching my gaze to try and look at the three others in the bus with me.

The man seated towards the back appeared to have calmed down a bit, his eyes no longer holding the fury from before. His shorter dark hair was roughed up from the manhandling, the sunlight partially revealing a deep tint of red within the strands as his dark eyes briefly locked with mine. The gag was still lodged in his mouth, a slight bulge pushing out against the fabric that was tightly wrapped around his mouth and head (like there was another rag stuffed into his mouth), and I couldn't help but feel a little sorry for him. He must've gotten into a lot of trouble with the guards back at prison...

I carefully looked towards the man who seemed to slouch against the side of the bus a row across from me, his hair more mussed up then the first's. A deep purple tint caught my eye in his hair and he had somehow found a way to raise his hands further than his chest, leaning against his left palm as he blankly stared out the window. When the trees passed overhead, I could've sworn that he was angled to look right at me through the glass reflection.

Clearing my head of those thoughts, I tried to look towards the last prisoner seated several rows directly ahead of me near the front, but I couldn't see more than the faint pink tint in his dark hair. I partially wondered if I had a tint to mine before I looked out the front windshield to see a large building turn into view as the bus rolled onto a street that looked more maintained than those in the surrounding area.

The building was nothing like the prison, only looking like some sort of business office or maybe some medical building that could be used for a

hospital. The parking lot was small and fully illuminated for the nighttime, while the windows appeared to have the blinds lowered to prevent sunlight from streaming in.

The bus pulled right up to the entrance of the building, the driver shutting off the engine and opening the door. He flipped around some keys before walking towards the back of the bus, heading straight to the gagged prisoner.

"You first."

Unlocking him from his seat, the driver dragged the prisoner through the small walkway as he tried to fight back, earning him another rough handling before the prisoner was tossed from the bus. I tried to see what happened before the driver walked back down the aisle, grabbing my hair and roughly pulling my head away from the window to give himself an easy angle for unlocking my chains. He never let go while I tried to follow him as much as I could, small whimpers pulled from my throat as I struggled to stay standing before being pushed out of the bus and into the awaiting arms of someone.

"Prisoner 4587, I presume."

The voice that called my number sounded calm, the exact opposite of the treatment I had just been given. I straightened out and looked up to see a man in a formal military uniform, his black gloves steadying my shoulders as his dark eyes swept up and down my form behind a pair of glasses.

His dark hair was well-kempt and groomed as the sun revealed a green tint within the hairs, the partial angle of his lips turning upwards into a small smile as we made eye contact. I quickly lowered my gaze from his, merely nodding my acknowledgement before his hands shifted from my shoulders to my wrists, the cuffs being examined by the new guard.

"Then you are the female participant we were expecting," Dropping my wrists with disinterest, the guard looked behind me before he motioned for me to follow. The gagged prisoner was nowhere to be seen, "You and the others will be well taken care of here as long as you follow the rules. The

rules that have been set by us are to be followed to the 't', and there will be strict consequences if they are broken in any capacity."

The guard opened the door to the building and I quickly followed him in, walking as fast as I could with the ankle restraints still locked on me. He didn't seem to care as he continued.

"You will address me as Choromatsu. The two other guards are to be addressed as Karamatsu and Jyushimatsu. The similar names are of no coincidence; we are brothers," Choromatsu explained before I could ask, "Prisoners 4981, 4240, and 9217 will be the only ones here besides you and, as such, the common quarters are considered co-ed. The only privacy you may find here from the others is the bathroom, but it's not a guarantee."

He unlocked a barred door and held it open for me, motioning for me to step through before I followed his silent order.

"Hands by the bars."

I complied quietly, raising my hands before he grabbed the cuffs between them, swiftly unlocking them and pulling the chain through the bars before bending down and repeating the motion for the ankle restraints. Rubbing my wrists gently, I watched as he worked before he stood back up, catching my eye.

"We'll call for you when we're ready to start."

With the simple sentence, Choromatsu clicked his heel against his other boot and turned the corner where we had come from. I waited until I couldn't hear his bootsteps anymore before looking around the area, more specifically at the clear division between prison and office.

The thick bars went through the ceiling and floor, with crossing bars to stabilize and ensure our captivity within this new place. The keyhole that Choromatsu had used was behind smaller grates of wire that prevented any kind of access from this side of the bars, but there was no second gate behind me. It seemed like one giant cell.

I took a few steps into the new area, seeing the small place laid out like some kind of open floor plan. The only room that was attached to this one was a bathroom, the solid wood door partially open and devoid of any locking mechanism or doorknob.

I looked up at all of the windows well out of reach, bars criss-crossing over the panes to prevent anyone from escaping or breaking in. My gaze fell to the floor, eyeing the four bedrolls that had been haphazardly thrown into one corner of the room before I started going through them, trying to see if there was something snuck in with the bundles that may have been forgotten by the guards here.

Nothing.

Letting out a soft sigh, I heard the barred door rattle a little and looked over to see another guard bringing the gagged prisoner into the room, tossing him onto the floor like trash before glancing over at me.

"You'll be joined by the others shortly. Make a mess and you'll be forced to clean it up," The new guard sneered down at the gagged prisoner, quickly removing his cuffs and gag before locking the door and walking away.

I stayed where I was, watching the gagged prisoner sit up after a long moment of silence, raising his right hand to scratch the back of his head while taking a long look around the cell.

"So, I guess we're all supposed to share this room, then," He finally spoke after a while, lowering his hand into his lap as he adjusted his sitting position. I noticed that his orange garb had been swapped for the traditional black-and-white striped uniform, the top half unzipped and revealing a red tank top underneath.

"Supposedly..." I didn't confirm anything, unsure of what this guy's intentions were. He glanced over at me before letting his gaze drop down to my lap, holding out a hand towards me.

"Toss one. I'll find a corner to camp out in," came the soft suggestion. I blinked a few times in confusion before realizing that he was asking for one

of the bedrolls, promptly tossing the top one in the pile over to him. He caught the awkward throw easily, slipping it underneath his left armpit as he stood up in the same motion.

"You...and the others," I started before biting down on my bottom lip, unsure if I even wanted to ask, "Did they tell you why we're here?"

"Only what the head warden told us before we boarded the bus," His voice was flat, as if he hated saying the response, "Damned asshole couldn't afford us an ounce of courtesy...still ruling us with an iron fist."

"I don't know much about how your side was run, but I've never heard of him..." Sitting down next to the other bedrolls, I pressed my back against the wall and crossed my legs in front of my chest, holding my knees close with my arms as I partially closed my eyes, "He must've been really rough with you guys since you seemed angry about him being there."

"You must've been a real special snowflake if you haven't heard of Warden Toyoki," The man scoffed as he threw the bedroll onto the floor, the thing unfurling a little with the force of the throw, "He's a crooked government man that paid his way into power, treating us all like shit and pretending that we volunteered to be in prison."

Sitting down heavily, the man grunted out an insult before slamming his left fist into the wall behind him.

"Careful with that mouth of yours, or I'll find better ways for you to use it."

Our attention was pulled to the barred wall, the door opening as the other two prisoners were shoved inside before they were quickly followed by a single guard. I could see the other two standing just outside the cell entrance, focusing back on the guard inside our shared cell and meeting his stern gaze.

"4587," I flinched at my prisoner number, "With me."

The red-shirted prisoner stood up at the same time as me, turning to face the guard with a challenge clearly shown in his expression, "Are you going to

give me an answer?"

The guard barely registered him speaking as he took long strides over to me, reaching down and grabbing my right arm roughly, "When your number is called, you come."

"Okay, okay!" I yelped as I was yanked up to my feet, the guard's strength taking me by surprise as he began pulling me around the other two prisoners and out of the cell. Casting a worried glance behind me, I could see the red-shirted prisoner move to the other two and kneel down next to them as I was pulled around the corner.

"I can see that Choromatsu was a little lenient with telling all of the rules to you upon your arrival, so I will do so in his place," The guard quipped, releasing my arm and slowing down his stride, "I am the head guard, Karamatsu. You will address me as Head Guard, 4587, and by no other name."

"Yes, Head Guard," I responded immediately, not wanting to find out what the punishment was.

"You will be assigned a uniform that is to stay on during your enrollment in this volunteer program," He continued as if I hadn't spoken, guiding me deeper into the office-like building before opening a door into a small room with a single chair, a black-and-white striped uniform folded up on its seat, "Change."

I hurried into the room and closed the door, peeling off the annoying orange uniform and donning the striped garb. I slipped on the tight white tank top shirt that came with it, pulling the sleeves of the top half on and partially zipping up the uniform until it was a comfortable length from my neck.

The door opened soon after, Karamatsu throwing it wide and completely exposing the room. When he verified that I was wearing the new uniform, he began walking back down the hallway as I quickly rushed to catch up.

"You will be in charge of keeping that uniform clean, as well as completing any of the chores and tasks that you will be assigned. That is the payment

that you will owe in exchange for public use of your health."

What?

"While enrolled in the program, you will be subjected to many different drugs -- both legal and experimental -- as well as their side effects. We will offer our hospital services to you, but will not remove the conditions that you're ailing from," Karamatsu turned on his heel to face me, my feet stopping me before I could run into him. I quickly nodded when I noticed that he was looking for a response, "You are the only woman healthy enough to participate, so we expect you to stay that way for the duration of the project."

I paled a little.

This was illegal human experimentation, a trip back into the Dark Ages for science...and they were going to use us four prisoners as living test subjects. We had no other option but to follow along if we wanted to get out of here.

Seeing my response, Karamatsu gave a soft smile, "If you're in need of anything, please don't hesitate to ask for it."

The first week we spent there was nothing overly traumatic.

There were general fitness tests, physical check-ups every once and a while to track our progress throughout the week, and some pills that we were ordered to take that had no adverse effects on us. I thought I had gotten a fever, but it just turned out to be a hot flash of sorts.

Boundaries and agreements were made between the other three prisoners and myself, each of us taking a corner of the room with them sleeping while facing the wall as I faced the inside of the room. The bathroom was partially easy to manage, but the absence of the lock on the door still made me anxious whenever I used it.

I had learned the others' real names through listening in on some of their conversations. The red-clothed one was called Osomatsu, the one with the purplish hair was Ichimatsu, and the pink one was Todomatsu. I told them my name when Osomatsu had asked for it, and they confirmed that the three guards were their brothers. I could easily tell by looking at the similarities between their faces, but never asked how it came to be that half were criminals and the others were on the law's side.

The second week was worse.

"Ichimatsu, you look like shit," Osomatsu laughed a little as his brother staggered into the cell, Karamatsu and Jyushimatsu standing by the door and watching as Ichimatsu fell to the ground.

Instantly, Osomatsu glared over at the two guards with a snarl, moving over to help Ichimatsu to his feet again. I had started to go help, but backed off when I felt the tension in the room grow thick and heavy, the feeling somehow wafting off of Osomatsu.

"What did you do?"

"Nothing different," Jyushimatsu responded with a smile, "His body probably doesn't like the drugs. He'll sleep it off and be back to normal when he wakes up."

Ichimatsu reached up and grabbed a fistful of Osomatsu's shirt, using it as leverage to try and stand on his own. The look of pain on his face was unbearable to watch, forcing my attention elsewhere as I hugged my knees close and prayed that whatever I was given didn't do that to me.

Jyushimatsu was proven to be right as Ichimatsu seemed to have recovered when he woke up from a nap to fight off whatever was going on with him.

The next number to be called was mine.

Choromatsu led me towards a different room than the one I went to in the previous week, ordered to lay on the examination table and stay still.

There was a large contraption near the head of the table, designed like a large donut and clearly some kind of examination machine that was connected to a computer on the other side of the room. A large rotund man walked towards me from the computer, a big smile on his face as he called out my number.

"Please, lay still on the table and keep your arms by your sides," His instructions so far were clear and I followed them without question, "I'll give you an injection that will act like a tracing fluid, and I want you to tell me what you feel."

Without much warning, the rotund man found a sizable enough vein and slid the needle into my skin, depleting the barrel within a few seconds as a wave of heat rushed through my body.

I tried to tell him what was going on, but the heat suddenly grew more intense around the injection site before washing over the rest of my body. The table underneath me shifted and the large donut-like object came closer to my head, my jaw locked in place by the intense pain that the heat was creating. My mouth opened uselessly as the pain wracked through my body, the jaw muscles clenching up tightly as I tried to scream out in pain. The noise barely made its way through my tense throat, the injection site blazing once more before a sudden rush of cold flooded my senses, hyper aware of the cold floor that I was laying on.

There was yelling around me as I tried to recover from whatever happened to me, feeling a pair of hot hands pressing down on my left shoulder and upper arm as I struggled to sit up on my own.

"--rst Ichimatsu and now her?! What the hell are you doing to us!?" Someone called out with a snarl, my head beginning to throb from a headache as I pushed myself away from the person trying to hold onto me. My hands somehow found their way up to my head and clamped down over my ears, muffling out the yelling match that was happening as I took in deep breaths to try and calm myself down.

My eyes slowly took in the sight of the youngest brother focusing on me, his hands barely skirting over my clothes as he tried to help me steady myself while his lips formed words that I couldn't hear. His dark eyes met mine and a quick smile flashed on his lips before he glanced behind him, our attention on the two men that were having a shouting match beyond my muffled barrier.

"The terms of your agreement were quite clear, Osomatsu," I recognized Choromatsu in his military garb, staring down at the group of prisoners like we were lower than the dirt beneath his heels, "Your health for the miniscule chores that you're to complete during your stay here. We will not allow you to die, but we will bring you as close to the edge as we like."

"You're insane," Osomatsu gritted his teeth as he glanced back at me, his eyes widening a little as we made eye contact before snapping his focus back to the green-clothed guard, "You understand that we're all squawking when we get out, don't you?"

"Ah, there's the threat," The guard smiled as if he was expecting something like that to be said, "It's too bad that none of you even asked how long your stay would be."

"You bastard--!"

A loud crack cut off Osomatsu's shout, silencing the rest of us as my mind settled back into its normal rhythms. A crop whip raised itself into view, the stiff length settling in Choromatsu's left hand as a satisfied sneer rested on his lips.

"4240 next."

Todomatsu swallowed the lump in his throat before releasing his hands on my shoulders, "...let's just get this over with."

He was returned with his hands handcuffed behind his back, a pleading look in his eyes that quickly turned into need as our gazes met. Once Todomatsu was released from Karamatsu's grip, the prisoner stood still before taking a tentative step towards my little corner.

"I'd watch out for this one," Karamatsu gave a soft laugh, his gloved hands flexing and testing out the tight fabric while his eyes narrowed towards me, "He's been jerking off for hours."

"Please...(y/n), I

need

you," Todomatsu's voice was pleading as he took a few more staggering steps, the lustful look hard to miss in his eyes as the prison pants did nothing to hide the swelling tent forming at his waist. He grunted as he tried to pull the handcuffs apart, clearly wanting nothing more than to snap the small chain that kept his hands from grasping at me, "Just...let me--"

Both Ichimatsu and Osomatsu tackled him to the ground as I skirted around the edge of the room to stand near Ichimatsu's bedroll, his corner opposite of mine.

"Totty!"

"Snap out of it, Todomatsu!" Ichimatsu growled as the youngest fought against the two men pinning him to the ground, his eyes trying to track my every movement.

"I'll let the good doctor know that you have this handled," Karamatsu stood up from his watchful position, taking in a breath to let out a sigh, "Who knows how long he's going to be like this?"

"Give him something to alleviate his state!" I cried out, bolting to the bars and gripping the cold metal tightly, "You can't just leave him like this!"

The head guard stopped dead in his tracks, the black overcoat sitting on his shoulders swaying to a halt before he slowly turned to face me. The military jacket hugged close to his chest, the collar spread wide open revealing a neatly pressed white shirt and black tie that dipped under the jacket, a lighter gray pair of pants disappearing underneath the split folds of the coat and tucking into the knee-high black boots. Gold tassels hung at his right

shoulder as two golden cords draped down and looped back up to his left shoulder, kept in place by a golden pine bush pin.

"You...want me to give him something?" The look in his wide blue eyes sent every negative emotion racing down my spine, "4587, I thought you were smarter than that..."

I let go of the bars and took a step back, remembering that Karamatsu had warned that they wouldn't alleviate

any

of the side effects that we would experience.

The snap of a heel on concrete made me flinch as the head guard stepped closer towards the bars separating us, "What was it that you were going to ask?"

"I..." My gaze fell to the floor as I glanced from side to side, knowing that if I repeated my question, I would more than likely be killed, "I was just wondering when...we'd be allowed to do laundry for our clothes..."

The deadly look on Karamatsu's face fell away with a smile, "Laundry will be done every Friday, so you'll need to wait for another three days."

"Thank you...Head Guard..." I weakly took another step back, casting a glance over my shoulder at the three other prisoners to find that they had left, the bathroom door firmly shut. Closing my eyes, I quickly walked to my bedroll and clamped my hands over my ears as the soft sounds of wet skin began slipping through the bathroom door, the wood muffling the sounds of Todomatsu begging for something more than a hand.

The third week was when hell truly started.

The drug racing through my system sent my nerves into overdrive as I lay naked on the floor, my prison clothes discarded by my own hands as my nethers were begging to be touched by anyone or anything. The guard that

had escorted me to the doctor's office this time was Jyushimatsu, and he had handcuffed me before I could plunge any of my fingers inside my aching entrance, lifting the chain to a small hook on the wall as I cried out for any kind of relief.

"This one seems to act as an aphrodisiac," The doctor commented as he wrote some notes down before looking towards Jyushimatsu, "Side effects should wear off in an hour or so."

"Did you want me to get another prisoner?" The cruel smile on his lips turned towards me as the doctor buried himself back into his notetaking.

"No, that's not necessary," With a wave of the pen, the doctor began to move to the door, "She'll come around with no repercussions, so we'll give a higher dose within the next few hours."

Jyushimatsu began to follow him out, ignoring my heated pleas for them to leave me with something that would satisfy the urge between my legs, "You didn't give her one yet?"

"Start small and work up to the higher dosage," The doctor laughed as the door closed behind the two of them, leaving me alone with my hands handcuffed above my head while my body lay sprawled on the floor. I tried to fight through the heavy fog in my mind that was solely focused on something being shoved deep inside my womb, every little movement sparking that urge to rise with a vengeance as my nipples perked up more and more from the cool air of the office.

I barely registered the door opening before I felt a hand grip my hair tightly, forcing me to look up as my body cried out for satisfaction.

I found myself staring up at Choromatsu, my half-lidded eyes searching his hues for some sort of reason why he was here.

"So, they started testing

that

drug..." The comment was directed at himself, the tone of his voice somehow drawing a moan from my throat, "And it seems to have a very

nasty

side effect..."

"Please...help..." My mind desperately fought for clarity again while struggling against the images of Choromatsu railing into me, each imagined thrust sending my entrance throbbing with want.

"I don't see how this would benefit me any," Choromatsu pulled up one of the chairs and dragged it close to me, sitting down and crossing his right leg over his left, "What would I get out of it if I gave you the antidote?"

"What...do you want?" The words fell from my mouth before I knew the answer, the smile spreading across his lips making my heart sink into despair as my body twitched with anticipation.

"It's been a long while since I've been with a woman...so I'll take a warm-up in exchange," Without moving from his position, Choromatsu flicked his wrist and the handcuffs were dragged from the wall into his grasp, the stiff crop whip pulling the small chain closer to him, "It's not like you have any say in the matter."

My body willingly settled into a kneeling position as the warmth between my legs raged into an inferno, my eyes weakly watching his hand swiftly unbuckle his pants. Pulling aside the long jacket flap covering his waist, Choromatsu watched me carefully as he unzipped the fly on his pants and teasingly released his swollen shaft. I wanted nothing to do with this, but my body leaned forward and carefully took the smelly thing in my open mouth.

"Do not bite," As if the words needed any punctuation, the chop whip settled against my left buttcheek, the tight leather head lightly rubbing against the skin as my tongue washed the dick from anything that clung to it.

The hint of violence should've made me stop.

It

should've

caused me to back away so that I didn't do anything...but it only caused me to moan as my tongue swirled around the penis head, my hands slowly drifting down to play with the outer lips of my drenched entrance.

As my fingers slipped inside the inner folds, my mouth took in Choromatsu's full length in tandem as my tongue pressed against the veiny curve of him. The crop tapped my butt again as a reminder, but my body somehow took that as a sign of 'continue', finding a deep rhythm that drew out a satisfied moan from my partner. I shoved two fingers deep inside and swirled them around as I moaned against his dick, feeling one gloved hand twist my hair into his grip as he suddenly forced my head into a rapid pace. His bucking waist did little to help the situation.

I took in what breaths I could through my nose before his penis was shoved to the back of my throat, hitting my uvula over and over as I fought down the feeling of gagging. Something deep within me warned that if I threw up on the guard, my punishment would become worse than it was right now.

"4587, if I didn't know any better," He grunted as the pace he picked never slowed down, my fingers following his incessant rhythm as I began to feel the inferno swell into a cresting wave, "I'd say that you've been waiting to do this ever since you arrived."

I squeezed my eyes shut tight, feeling a tear threaten to fall down my left cheek. A light caress of leather alerted me to the guard swiping the tear away as he continued to shove my head down onto his shaft.

"Of course, that would imply that I'm blind to what's going on in this building," His hand released its hold on my hair as it trailed down the back of my head to my neck, settling low on my right shoulder as Choromatsu's other hand gripped his dick tightly near the base, "You are still my prisoner and you

will

follow my orders."

Before I could think to ask what he meant, I was shoved down to the ground and viciously assaulted as Choromatsu straddled my chest, my arms thrown above my head and pinned down by his new position as his dick was shoved into my open mouth. His gloved fingers entangled themselves in my hair once more as he bucked into my mouth, somehow shoving himself further down my throat.

The new position cleared the thick fog in my head and I began to struggle for air, the arousal that my body had been feeling from the drugs wearing off very quickly as I visually pleaded for Choromatsu to stop.

His pace never slowed as his fierce green eyes glared down at me.

"Swallow it all, whore."

The command barely gave me any time to realize what he meant before I felt his shaft expand a little, a wave of salty warmth coating my mouth as I coughed for air. I could feel the thick juice spurt up through my nostrils, stinging the sensitive walls as my eyes teared up from the sudden pain.

"I said to swallow it all," The guard's hands kept my head still as he forced my jaw to lower, shoving his still-hard member into my mouth, "Clean it all up if you want to go back to your cell."

If I could turn off my sense of taste, I would've done so immediately.

The slightly salty taste was nothing compared to what I had been told, trying not to wince as I lapped up what I could from the guard's dick. My nose still hurt, but I knew that I couldn't complain about it...not if I wanted to leave the situation as quickly as possible.

Choromatsu lowered his gaze and pulled himself out of my mouth, slowly glancing over my oral work before standing up and putting the semi-soft

shaft away, fixing his appearance. He walked towards the door and flung it open.

"I'll let the doctor know you're ready for the higher dosage," He barely glanced over his shoulder to look at my weak form laying on the ground where he left me, "The drug's side effects have worn off faster than expected."

I was tossed back into the cell without much ceremony, falling to the ground as Choromatsu slammed the gate shut behind me. The second dose had been worse than the first, the side effects lasting for what seemed like hours as Choromatsu had once more come into the room after the doctor left, promising to give me something to alleviate the effects I was under before forcing me to give him oral sex again. I had refrained from touching myself the second time around, but that only seemed to entice the guard even more as he had cuffed my ankles to the legs of a chair and forced me to sit up, using both of his hands to ensure that he was going deep enough in my mouth.

"(Y/n)..." Someone said my name softly, my skin begging for someone to touch it as they pressed their hand on top of my clothed back, "...let's get you cleaned up."

I could only whimper a response as my legs refused to walk on their own, barely registering that the person speaking had helped me up to my feet and guided me into the bathroom.

With the door shut behind us, I was moved to the rear part of the room to sit on one of the stools that had been left for us. The person walked in front of me, revealing their pink undershirt as they turned on one of the showerheads and lifted a washcloth into the warm water.

"You don't need to say what happened..." His voice was gentle, "Just take this and clean off what you need to. I'll be outside to make sure that no one comes in."

My hand reached out and grabbed the longer sleeves of the prison uniform that were tied around his waist, the wash cloth clenched in my other hand as

I looked up at him.

"Please...I don't want to be alone right now..."

An understanding look washed over Todomatsu's face, bringing him to stand close enough to me that I could reach out and touch him without feeling threatened, "I'll be here."

I shouldn't have said anything. I should've known that the rules of the previous prison would carry over into this horror show...but I said the words, and now I was paying for it.

Osomatsu and I were tethered down to chairs after being administered a new drug, the side effects causing different reactions and drawing the interest of the doctor as he stayed and watched everything play out. The drug had thrown Osomatsu into a nearly heated frenzy as he gritted his teeth and stayed as still as he could while his body craved for anything that had a hole to shove his dick into, while the drug had loosened my tongue, my words falling from my lips before I could even think of what I was going to say.

Now, I was paying the price for saying that I was innocent...despite it being the truth.

My chair had been moved to face his, a bar gag shoving my tongue into my mouth to keep me from speaking as my ankles were handcuffed to the back legs of the chair, forcing me to spread them wide.

"Poor Osomatsu..." Karamatsu stood right behind Osomatsu, his gloved hands forcing the prisoner to look in my direction as another guard lowered his hands onto my shoulders, making me flinch and look back to see Choromatsu glancing down at me, "It must be cruel to be stuck with only one woman between the three of you..."

I couldn't stifle the moan that pushed past the gag as Choromatsu's hands lowered to massage my breasts through the shirt, causing Osomatsu to lean

forward with an angered glare resting in his eyes. The head guard stepped between us with a light laugh while I closed my eyes tightly to try and fight against the pleasure that my body was desperately trying to feel from the other guard's touch.

"There is no one innocent here," Choromatsu had leaned down to whisper in my ear as his hands roughly pulled the shirt up to rest above the perky mounds, the fingertips dancing across the sensitive nubs as I tried to hold back a cry of pleasure, "You're serving a life sentence with no parole, 4587...a murderer like you has no right to say that they're innocent."

"Tell me, brother," Karamatsu cooed out softly before a yell of agony was pulled from Osomatsu, "You've always been the one pursuing women like they were supposed to bow to your every whim. Tell me what your thoughts are about the whore in front of you."

I refused to open my eyes despite the poking and prodding that my nipples were receiving from Choromatsu, squirming against his touch and desperately wanting to disappear.

Instead of an answer, the room grew silent when someone spat. Choromatsu's fingers paused in their teasing as I gingerly opened my eyes to see Osomatsu licking his bottom lip while leveling a wicked glare to Karamatsu. The head guard's hand slowly lifted to his left cheek, wiping off a glob of spit with a look that I could only describe as murderous before a soft smile tugged at his lips.

"Well, I'm sure that you meant to aim the spit elsewhere, but that doesn't detract from your punishment," Without warning, Karamatsu kicked the chair that Osomatsu was sitting in onto the ground and held up his crop whip, smacking it down over and over with a hatred that seemed to grow with each hit. Osomatsu refused to cry out in pain until the crop snapped across his swollen member, curling up into a ball as much as his restraints allowed him to.

"Karamat--" Choromatsu started before the head guard leveled a glare at him, "Would you like me to remove the other prisoner before you continue, Head Guard?"

"No..." A thoughtful look crossed Karamatsu's face before roughly lifting Osomatsu back up, the prisoner whimpering at the forced movement. Grabbing a fistful of his dark hair, Karamatsu lifted Osomatsu's vision up to him, "I used to look up to you as a role model...but know that I still love you like a brother and want the very best for you."

"The next doses are ready to be administered," The doctor called out as he held up a metal tray containing a few syringes. The head guard glanced at the syringes before looking over at me.

"Switch who gets what drug, doc," His dark eyes landed on Osomatsu's furious glare once more, "I want to hear what he really thinks."

I could only utter apologies when Osomatsu and I were led back to the cell, his once-determined eyes now hollow and devoid of much emotion. When the guards had locked the gate and walked away, I held Osomatsu for a moment to try and comfort him before he shoved me away, struggling to stand up as he slowly moved towards the bathroom.

"Osomatsu?" Ichimatsu took a few steps before he was waved aside, an accusatory glare leveled at me when the bathroom door shut, "What the hell did you do?"

"I..." Tears pooled at the corners of my eyes before streaming down my cheeks, "The guards

raped

him...and forced me to watch."

We barely stayed sane throughout the rest of the week, each of us being taken away, sexually abused, and returned without much comment from any of the guards. Osomatsu had regained his defiance despite being the main target of Karamatsu's punishments, and Ichimatsu and Todomatsu helped each other when Jyushimatsu had come to collect them. I was clearly

Choromatsu's favorite, his touches becoming more and more violent as the drug doses grew into unbearable side effects.

Ichimatsu had been dragged away kicking and screaming by the other two guards while Jyushimatsu reprimanded him for biting his dick, warning that Todomatsu would face the same punishment if he even had a single thought of brushing his teeth against skin. The three of us stayed in relative silence when we were shocked awake by the screams of Ichimatsu down the hall.

"You said that you're innocent."

Osomatsu's voice caught my attention from the opposite side of the single room, his body showing signs of the recent abuse only yesterday. I had stopped trying to comfort the other prisoners as they all seemed to refuse what I had meant as a show of goodwill, keeping to myself when I wasn't being dragged out by the guards for the daily testing period.

"...I am," My eyes darted away from the stern look held within his gaze, bringing my knees up to my chest in an effort to make myself appear smaller.

"What were you convicted of?"

"Several counts of first-degree murder. The actual killer had used my winter driving gloves and somehow managed to erase their own prints within the glove."

"Probably used nitrile gloves," Osomatsu leaned back until he was resting against the concrete wall, shifting his focus up to the windows high above him, "It's a common tactic for those who don't want to get caught. Who did you 'kill'?"

"Kids...women...some men, but it all seemed to be whoever was in front of them at the time," Folding my arms over my knees, I buried the lower half of my face into my forearm, "Not that you'd believe me...I wasn't really given a chance to defend myself since my prints were found everywhere."

"I believe you."

The soft affirmation drew my attention back to Osomatsu, uncertainty plainly written on my face.

"Why? What if I'm actually guilty and just trying to portray being weak and helpless so that I can get out of here?"

"You don't have the look in your eyes," He lifted one of his hands to point at his own eyes, "Some people put up an act to come across as innocent, but I watch them long enough to see that mask drop when they think no one's looking. Your demeanor hasn't changed since stepping on the bus. You're quiet, pensive, and a little out there...but not enough to be guilty of murder."

"And...that makes me innocent?"

"It makes me believe you," Osomatsu clarified, looking over towards the barred gate in silence before speaking again, "I'll help you get out of here."

"But how?" I lowered my voice to a whisper, not wanting to be heard or draw the ire of the guards that could be standing out of our view.

"Not sure, but my brothers and I will get you out before anything else happens to you...We know we deserve this, but if you're as innocent as you proclaim, then you don't need to be here," He lay down on his bedroll with a sigh, turning to face the wall with a wince, "Just bear with this for a little while longer and we'll come up with a plan."

The days started to blend together, with sleep eluding some of us while the others were taken from our cell and tested on.

Ichimatsu had been returned with some of his teeth missing and, when I tried to see what I could do to console him, he and Todomatsu were dragged out of the cell when they started kicking and screaming at each other. I was left with Osomatsu, who offered what words he could.

He and the others were taken more often than I was from the cell, returning with more bruises, looks of shame, and glances of hatred at the guards

returning them.

I never asked what happened to them, but seeing what had happened to Osomatsu...I could only guess that the guards' treatment of them was becoming more and more perverse.

"4587."

My prisoner number was gruffly called out, snapping me out of my sleep as I quickly looked towards the barred gate. Choromatsu stood there with a frown resting on his lips. Standing up and moving towards the gate, I didn't ask why he was calling me...asking questions were always met with harsher punishments.

"Your presence is becoming a hindrance to the program, so you will be removed and have your actions corrected," The handcuffs tightened around my hands before I was allowed to step through, glancing back to see an extremely concerned Osomatsu and Todomatsu watching me, "When the problem is corrected, then you will be brought back. This will be over quickly if you're obedient."

I was steered around the corner and down a few hallways before passing the door that I usually was directed to, confusion growing on my face until Choromatsu pushed me through a sturdy-looking door. The room beyond was dark and devoid of windows, the only lighting coming from the small corner lamps that illuminated a nearly empty room. It resembled an office...except that the only 'furniture' in the room was something akin to a wooden stock used for medieval punishments.

The stock was forged from metal, with two chains hanging loose on one side of the metal divider, three holes carved into the piece that seemed to fit two arms and something much larger than a neck.

"4587," Choromatsu's voice cut through my thoughts as he brought me over the metal stock, his glare holding me in place as he unfastened the handcuffs, "We're experiencing a lot more problems than we anticipated, and the only conclusion that we could come to was that you're the problem with the program."

"So, you'll be serving out your punishment for interfering here," Karamatsu's voice nearly made me jump out of my skin, his gloved hands forcing me into a kneeling position as the metal clamped down just above my belly button, drawing a cry of shock from my lips as I was practically bisected by the metal stock. I couldn't move my arms or chest anywhere, the kneeling position becoming nearly unbearable.

"We'll see if you're using your 'womanly wiles' to interfere with what the program is doing," Choromatsu stepped in front of me, squatting down and offering a small smile, "If you prove that you're not, then you'll be returned to the cell until your next test."

"4981 and 9217 were acting strangely, asking for double doses when they heard that we were to give them to you...and 4240 was adamant about taking on your chores," I felt a pair of hands rub the outside of my thighs, unable to see who it was but hearing Jyushimatsu's voice, "If you're forcing them to do things...then you need to be punished harshly."

Choromatsu reached down my arms, his smile turning into a pleased sneer as I felt his fingers tug up the shirt I was wearing, pulling it up past my breasts and exposing the mounds of flesh to the cool air.

"No, please don't! I've done nothing wrong!" I cut myself off before a whimper could sound itself as Choromatsu's hands lightly brushed against the exposed nipples.

"It's no use trying to use your wiles on us," Choromatsu began to massage both breasts in his hands, moving a little closer as the sneer widened, "Follow our orders and the punishment won't be harsh."

"No, please don't rap--!" My pleas were cut off as he pressed his lips against mine, pinching both nipples harshly as I felt my lower half become suddenly exposed to the air. Tears fell from my eyes as I felt something press against my outer folds, swiping up before pulling them apart a little.

"Did you hear that, Head Guard?" Jyushimatsu teased as someone spread my buttcheeks wide, "I heard a little bit of resistance."

"That won't do."

I screamed in pain as I felt something warm and hard shove itself into my entrance, pushing me forward as much as the stock would allow. My arms were pinned into useless positions as I tried to fight off whoever it was before I felt a second hard object prod my butt, opening my mouth to protest. My words were silenced as Choromatsu pushed himself inside my mouth, picking a pace that was just as grueling the first time he forced me to perform oral sex on him, my attention now diverted between three people and unable to focus on anyone.

"Such a good prisoner," Choromatsu gently brushed some hair away from my face before thrusting harder into my mouth, "She should be looser down there."

"She is," Karamatsu grunted as the member shoved into my cavern picked up its pace before a third pressed itself into my butt, the dick in my mouth silencing the screams of pain while Jyushimatsu laughed.

"Don't fight this, 4587, and you'll have some fun with this, too."

I tried to bite down, to break free from the stocks, to do anything that would give me some inch of control over the situation...but the three guards that had spent the previous few weeks training us to obey their every order had made sure that I didn't have any kind of leverage in this position, my knees bent on the ground as I felt two different paces inside of me, my head held up by Choromatsu from the front as he released his load into my throat.

My breasts were becoming sore from the constant teasing and pinching, my knees sore from the harsh carpeting on the floor, and my mouth, womb, and butt tired from the constant attention.

I lost count of how many times the guards traded positions, how many times that they had cum inside me...how many times I could've told them to stop...

The guards praised my passive behavior with softer touches and kisses, even finding new spots to show affection as my body bent to their will.

I woke up to Ichimatsu and Todomatsu holding me in the bathroom, their colored shirts soaked in water as they cautiously rubbed the fabric against my arms and face, noticing that I was coming around.

"What...how long was I gone?"

Ichimatsu kept his mouth shut as Todomatsu looked at him nervously before meeting my gaze, "Five days...we didn't know what had happened to you until...the guards dumped you in front of the gate."

"Five...days?" I took the shirt that Ichimatsu offered, wiping off my face and realizing that I'd have to clean myself off, "Did...Osomatsu tell you anything about escaping?"

"Yeah, but I guess our efforts to help you out caused this to happen..." Todomatsu's partial smile fell, "We got one of the bars loosened enough for someone of your size to climb through."

"But what about the rest of you?"

"Don't worry about us," He offered a genuine smile again, "We're craftier than we look."

Ichimatsu raised up a finger before pointing towards the bathroom door. Todomatsu gave a brief nod before standing up with his brother, "You should be able to get out tonight after the guards finish their night patrol."

"But..." I was hushed as Todomatsu opened the bathroom door.

"Get cleaned up, 4587. We'll deal with the rest."

The night fell faster than I thought it would, the guards taking Osomatsu and Ichimatsu from the cell before turning off the lights, a sign that usually meant that they weren't coming back.

Todomatsu waited until he didn't hear anything happen for a few hours, waving me over to one of the lower windows and cupping his hands together as he planted his back against the wall directly underneath it.

"What about you all?" I lifted a foot up into his hands and rested my own on his shoulders.

"Don't worry about us. Go live the rest of your life, (y/n)."

With my name hanging in the air, I was lifted up to the bars and found two of them to be extremely loose, pulling them apart with ease and squeezing my way through onto a grassy field. I glanced back down towards the cell, seeing Todomatsu give a wave as he stepped away from the window.

"Just stay off the road for a while. We don't know if the guards and doctor stay here or not."

"Todomatsu...thank you, and be sure to thank your brothers for me."

So you see...I really want to pay the prisoners back for what they did. They may have been guilty of heinous crimes, but this one act of saving me from the torture that was going on spoke more to me than whatever their crimes were.

And me? The problem that I need help with? I'm pregnant, and I don't know whose it is...but I don't want any of them to know.

--Mature-- Brothers x Isekai!Reader

Inspired by sakihik0's prompt.

WARNING!

This is a mature chapter, and meant for an 18+ audience. If you're younger than that, I respectfully ask that you find something else to read.

If you're older than 18, you may continue at your own discretion.

This story contains mentions of drug use, sexual assault, and sexual scenes (male to female).

I took a deep breath and strode through the doors of a gambling parlor, partially holding my breath from the cigarette smoke that wafted throughout the place. Eyeing the pachinko machines, I spotted a secluded seat that was away from where the other patrons were betting. Settling down after exchanging some money for balls, I licked my lips nervously.

This was probably the last chance I had to see any of the sextuplets that I had fallen in love with.

What I had dreamt of for so long had happened. I didn't care

how

, but the fact remained the same: I was 'stuck' in the world of Osomatsu-san, my absolute favorite animated TV series. A week had already passed since I

woke up in this animated world, and I worked within the confines of the 'anime world' rules to transport myself to where I really wanted to be.

Akatsuka Ward in Japan.

Since then, I had been nearly hellbent on finding any of the sextuplets that shared the same face. The usual fishing hole that had been depicted in the show, passing by a not-so-sciencey looking lab that resembled one of the side characters (knowing full well that accidents tended to happen there), staying for a full day at the horse track some of the characters were known to frequent, and now visiting the gambling parlor one of the brothers frequented after staying for a cup of coffee at a coffee shop another brother worked at.

This was my last ditch effort at finding

any

of the characters from the show.There wasn't a deadline or anything...but I became disheartened after searching for my favorite characters for so long. I didn't want to deal with more heartbreak on top of what I knew was coming.

After all, the Osomatsu-san series made it

very

clear that the six main characters were head-over-heels for the female lead, Totoko.

My lips parted as a sigh escaped, timed well with the small win I claimed from the pachinko machine.

"It's not every day that I see a downtrodden woman like you sighing at a win like that," My heart froze, instantly recognizing the hidden drawl in the speaker's voice as the person swiveled into a seat next to mine, "Mind if I borrow that luck?"

"It's not luck that I've got," My mind screamed as I tried to calmly speak, every nerve in my body wanting to jump up and shout the brother's name to the point of annoyance, "I just know how to play the game."

"Hmm," I didn't flinch from the sound of a lighter striking flint, taking some enjoyment as the fresh smell of cigarette smoke washed over my nose, "Still."

A masculine hand held out a handful of pachinko balls in front of me, his arm hidden underneath a red colored sleeve.

I knew what he wanted me to do and so complied, softly blowing on the metal balls to brush away the bad luck clinging to them from the previous user. His first winnings were the same as mine.

"Hot damn. Looks like I found myself a gambling partner," The speaker finally turned to face me, my focus catching his dark hues out of the corners of my eyes, "What's your name, darling?"

"Isn't it bad luck to ask for a name without introducing yourself first?" I tilted my head towards him, barely turning in my seat as I faced him.

The eldest sextuplet looked a little surprised at first before letting his familiar smirk wash over his lips, "Osomatsu Matsuno."

"(Y/n) (L/n)."

"Sounds foreign," He turned back towards his machine, playing some more and giving small celebrations as he continued his winning streak.

"It is. Visiting Japan for personal reasons," I swallowed the fangirl scream lodged in my throat, "Your face is familiar to me."

"You must've seen my brothers, then, because I've never seen you before," Osomatsu let out a short laugh. I knew that sound, knew that it meant he was annoyed at the subject.

Time to talk about something else, then.

"Since you seem like a gambling man, have you visited the tracks recently?" Another win fell into my basket, catching Osomatsu's attention for a brief moment.

"Not recently," He shrugged as he winced from a small loss, "If I win the next round, I'll take you there."

"I may know pachinko, but I have no clue how horse races are run," I chuckled, partially covering my mouth with the back of my hand, "Besides, this place is growing on me."

"You're turning down a free trip?" Osomatsu gave a genuine laugh, one that held his surprise.

"No, I'm turning down a free trip

from you

," I playfully stuck out my tongue as our machines rang out in different tones, signaling a win for me while he had a loss.

"Damn," He leaned back, tucking his hands into his hoodie's front pocket as he deftly moved the cigarette from one corner of his mouth to the other, "Well, how else can I get you to hang around so I can win more money?"

"A drink is a good start," I gathered my winnings into the basket and stood up from the stool, my motions mimicked by Osomatsu. As badly as I wanted to go on a date with him, the very word would send him into a shock that not even his brothers could bring him out of. If I wanted to see more of him, I couldn't appear to be a romantic interest, "Something with alcohol but not terribly strong."

"I know a good place for that, (y/n). Want to go there now?" The grin widened on his lips, his dark eyes closing with content.

"Sure, sounds good."

I finished the second glass of beer, downing the last sip with a flourish as a drunken Osomatsu stared at me from across the table, his thumb caressing the rim of his fourth glass like he was pondering what life meant to him.

"Curious about something?" I lifted a brow in curiosity, never seeing one of my favorite characters act like this.

"Just one thing..." The drunken drawl in his voice was adorable to listen to, "...why have you been eyeing me all this time?"

"Can't I appreciate someone who's good looking?" I gave a soft shrug, "The dark hair and dark eyes give you an average appearance, but there's something about you that I really like."

And I can't say it or you'll think I'm insane.

"It can't be my 'good looks'," He muttered as he leaned back on the floor, pulling up his legs from the little foot pit underneath the table, "Karamatsu has his fashion and no one really cares about what I look like."

The invisible episode flashed in my head, stifling the laughter from the gag scene where none of the sextuplets could recall anything specific about Osomatsu when they were painting his 'skin' on.

"I like the color red," I took a swig of water from the glass I had ordered a little while ago, hoping to take the edge off the hangover early.

"Is that all?" Osomatsu seemed to revel in his drunken stupor, but I knew that he was still fully cognizant of everything going on despite the amount of alcohol he'd had. The smoldering expression he wore was nearly maddening for my inner fangirl.

"How about this: I tell you one thing I like about you for every drink we share together, starting when we next get together?" I offered a bet, knowing he'd take it seriously. I just hoped that his infatuation with Totoko wouldn't interfere.

"Deal. I'll take you out drinking after our next gambling session, and you tell me something you like about me," His face was flushed red, but the clear intention in his eyes warned me that he would remember this.

"Then it's settled," I gathered my heavy sweater over my arm, standing up with ease after laying the payment on the bill, "See you at the pachinko parlor in two days?"

"You can bet on it."

I shouldn't have taken the bet.

The magazine I had bought to practice my Japanese sat abandoned in my lap as a group of people walked past me, each of the six men sharing the same face...each man following a brown-haired woman.

Totoko Yowai.

With the sextuplets fawning over her every whim, I knew that today was when she scheduled her 'all day shopping spree' with the Matsuno sextuplets. There wasn't even a slim chance of Osomatsu being able to gamble today.

I had seen how the brothers became when they volunteered to be her bag boys and knew it was useless to try and persuade them to not go. Totoko's hold over them was solid.

My only chance was...

I guzzled the last bit of drink as the oden stand owner watched passively, setting the cup down gently and taking some more oden. This was a good place to come across the brothers, and I knew how to speak with the owner.

"Perks of watching the show, I guess..." I muttered under my breath, popping a boiled egg into my mouth.

"Anything else I can get you?" Chibita was kind to his customers, especially the ones that paid their tabs.

"One more round," I watched as he poured another strong beer into the empty glass, setting the bottle aside just in case I wanted to finish it, "You know the Matsuno brothers."

"Yeah, grew up with the miserable lot."

"Do you know that I'm in love with them?" Probably not the best thing to say, but I didn't really care. I knew that the brothers wouldn't be around to hear me until much later in the night.

"Oh, really? Why would those pieces of shit interest you so much?" The bald man sounded shocked but interested.

"Because they tell you what you're getting if you're interested in them romantically. They don't hide behind this façade of fake ambitions; they strive to change for the better when they are faced with their parents failing health, and don't really take the nonsense that the world throws at them," I drank the glass in a few swigs, refilling it from the bottle Chibita had left close to me. I could feel the impressed stare.

"How do you know all this? Are you a classmate of theirs?"

"...you could say that."

"Ah," The exclamation from Chibita drew my attention, several voices growing louder as they approached the stall, "Speak of the devils..."

"Here's my payment," I pushed the bills towards Chibita, gathering my sweater around my shoulders and moving from the bench, "Put the rest towards their tab."

"Hey...! Wait!" Chibita called out as I moved from his oden stand, keeping pace as the Matsuno brothers arrived at the cart.

"Whoa, Chibita! You've been drinking without us?" I could hear Osomatsu start to dig at the balding man, laughter ringing out as they all began

gathering their food and putting drink orders in.

"You're lucky I'm in a good mood today. Your classmate was just here, took some weight off your tab," Chibita swore under his breath while the statement drew some confusion from the sextuplets.

"Classmate?"

"Yeah, woman about your age," He began to describe my appearance, but it was lost as I heard Todomatsu cry out that his pictures were being ruined by Jyushimatsu's face.

The rest of the conversation faded into silence as I moved to my destination, not wanting to disrupt their usual oden visit.

Another turn of the knob let the pachinko balls fall through the little pegs that served as obstacles for the game, more winnings falling into my basket.

I had chosen my seat from the previous few days, away from the cigarette smoke that had started to bother me, but still within view of the front doors of the gambling parlor.

"(Y/n), you're here!" Osomatsu's voice was loud among the mechanical noises, barely drawing my attention as he grabbed the seat and machine next to mine, "Sorry for yesterday. There was something that I needed to take care of that I completely forgot about when we drank."

"Your shopping spree with Totoko?" The words came out more barbed than I wanted, "You had told me about it, so I wasn't here yesterday."

A confused look settled on his face. He hadn't told me, but I would rather spend my energy figuring out what to do next instead of mulling over hurt feelings.

"Did...I mention it?" His back became more slouched as he went through his memories.

"Water under the bridge, regardless. Need more of my 'luck'?"

"What else did we talk about that night?"

My eyes darted over to Osomatsu, seeing him completely pensive in thought, "Is...there something bothering you?"

His dark eyes flicked over to me before lowering back to his machine, "...normally I'm able to recall everything that happens while I'm drunk, but you're confident that I said things I don't remember...it's very strange."

"Alcohol blackouts happen, Osomatsu," I mentally apologized for the gaslighting, knowing full well that I'd need to correct it when the time was right.

"Ah,

brother

Osomatsu!" My heart skipped a beat at the thick English accent, identifying exactly who was speaking without turning around, "There you are."

"What's up, Karamatsu?"

"Something's up with Jyushimatsu and Todomatsu. Both are complaining about stomach cramps," The second-eldest sextuplet was more handsome in person, my head turning to finally look at the newcomer. His eyebrows were clean and bushy, the dark blue sheen in his hair mimicking the red sheen in Osomatsu's, but the semi-tight leather jacket around his torso was more than enough to send my inner fangirl screaming, "Ah, sorry to interrupt."

"You're not interrupting anything," Osomatsu stood from his stool, putting away his pack of cigarettes and lighter that I hadn't realized he had taken out, "Are they at home?"

"Will you need someone to grab meds?" I followed his lead, "Stomach pains shouldn't be ignored."

"And you are...?" Karamatsu paused as Osomatsu walked past him, his gaze meeting mine in confusion.

"Gambling partner of Osomatsu's," I shoved my winnings into my wallet, "I'll go grab the medicines you'll need."

"Do you even know where our house is...?" I could see the suspicion grow on Karamatsu's face.

"Two level house with a green roof? I pass by it every day."

"Okay, I'll accompany you."

"This one should help with any acid reflux problems, but I don't think that's really the issue," Karamatsu lifted up a bottle of liquid medicine, brushing away some hair from his face with his other hand, "Did you find anything useful?"

"Here," I held out a roll of chewable tablets, "These are fast-acting and should be enough for their pain."

He took the roll from my hand, adding it to the basket he held in the crook of his arm, "Sorry for relying on you for this. I've never really been shopping for meds before...it's usually something my mom does."

"There's no shame in learning something new," I offered a small smile, walking with him to the cashier and paying for the medicines.

"May I ask something?" Karamatsu set the pace towards his house, the plastic bag held firmly in his left hand. I found myself tempted to hold his right hand, as I was already walking on his right side.

"Go ahead."

"Are you really...just gambling partners with Osomatsu?"

"Has he said otherwise?" I lifted an eyebrow in curiosity.

"He mentioned that you were willing to put up with his random conversations," Karamatsu's face became dusted in red, his eyes looking up and away from me, "But he also said that you were somehow familiar to him as he hung out with you, so I wanted to see if we knew you from somewhere."

"Want to hear a lie or the truth?" I cast my gaze to the pavement, watching my feet synchronize with his steps.

"Would the truth be hard to hear?" Karamatsu's question was a perfect response, drawing a smile to my face.

"I'm not from here, and 'by here' I mean this world."

"Are you an alien, or some kind of visitor then?" His shift in tone signaled that he thought there was some kind of gag skit going on, my eyes shifting up to see a look of disbelief on his face, "It's a good joke."

"You could say that," The wide smile I gave felt fake, but I couldn't let this chance slip by, "I'm not here to hurt anyone, just...thriving in a different environment that I've wanted to see for years."

"For an alien, you're very kindhearted," A warmth surrounded my left hand, my focus darting down to see Karamatsu's hand holding mine. I swallowed the scream I wanted to let out, my hand becoming rigid from the desired contact before I forced it to relax, "Come on, our house is this way."

Despite knowing exactly where the sextuplet's bedroom was, I had to allow myself to be led inside and up the stairway, leaving my face a blank mask while taking in the details of their room that the show hadn't specified.

"Here, chew these tablets,

brothers

," Karamatsu stooped down and offered medicine to the groaning mess of Todomatsu and Jyushimatsu. Osomatsu was present in the room, kneeling

next to a bowl filled with cold water while wringing handtowels that had been dipped in it.

"Found something that could work?"

"Yeah, chewable tablets. They should take effect rather quickly, so it's best if we just let them rest," I spoke from the doorway, torn between wanting to tend to their needs and not intruding on the special scene I was seeing unfold in front of me. The brothers rarely showed any care towards each other on the show.

"Thanks for helping," Osomatsu turned his attention back towards the youngest pair of sextuplets, watching carefully as Karamatsu helped the two take the tablets.

"...I'll...be downstairs."

"Sounds good, (y/n)."

I quietly padded down the stairway, the fingers of my left hand slightly dragging across the stair wall with each step.

Each footfall became more unnerving as the situation I found myself in finally registered in my head: I was in the Matsuno household. Totoko wasn't around and what I had just seen...wasn't really shown on the TV show.

My presence here...began to feel wrong. I was never a part of their universe originally, so why did I have the audacity to try and force myself into it?

Sitting down at the short table in their common room, I leaned against it as I crossed my arms and rested my head on them.

This was...peaceful.

I knew of every scene that happened in this location -- could replay them verbatim in my head -- but the anime never really established how

peaceful

this room was. Each breath I took smelled of Japanese parsley and ginger thanks to the kitchen through the sliding door, my imagination piecing together the food that was made for the brothers with love by their mother.

Just the eight of them in this house for the twenty-odd years the brothers have been alive.

My head pressed further into the cradle of my arms.

I can just enjoy their company from afar...I shouldn't barge into their lives.

"--look better for the moment."

"You have a quick mind, (y/n)," I heard the sliding door open from the hallway, close to the stairs that accessed the brothers' bedroom, "The chewable tablets seemed to be the right move."

"I'm happy to hear that Todomatsu and Jyushimatsu are doing better," I lifted my head to look at the two older brothers, mimicking a tired smile on my lips in an attempt to hide the turmoil that I was currently feeling.

Karamatsu had swapped out his leather jacket for the signature blue hoodie, the sleeves partially tucked up his forearms to expose his wrists. The second-oldest planted himself at the table, bringing his right knee up to his chest as his left leg sat on his right foot, "They both passed out once the discomfort was taken care of, so it's best if we remove ourselves from the home."

"To let them rest? Sounds fair."

"Let's go drinking!" Osomatsu laid a heavy hand on my shoulder, drawing my attention as his mouth spread into a goofy grin, "I wanna find out more of what you like about me."

"That deal's still on, huh?" I furrowed my brow in displeasure, hoping that he wasn't going to bring this up again until I figured out exactly where I fit in this world.

"Deal?" Karamatsu's right eyebrow lifted in intrigue, "What's this 'deal'?"

"Oh, every time (y/n) and I go out for a drink, she has to tell me one thing that she likes about me," Osomatsu pointed an index finger at himself as he closed his eyes giddily, the grin growing wider, "She likes red."

"Oh, really?" The second-oldest lowered a knowing hooded glance to me, "I'm rather curious to know what else you like about

Osomatsu

. Let's go drinking, then."

Another empty glass tapped the bar's surface, Osomatsu's hand never faltering in its grip as he let out a satisfied sigh from the long drink, "This is

definitely

the best way to relax after a tiring day."

"You barely did

anything

," Karamatsu huffed with a smirk, finishing off his alcohol after speaking.

"He probably gambled," I laughed, feeling pleasantly buzzed from the single strong drink I had ordered. My hand held a glass of iced water, the intention to not publically intoxicate myself well known to the two brothers, "Make anything without your 'good luck charm'?"

Osomatsu looked towards me, his cheeks flushed while playfully hooding his eyes as he leaned close, "Wouldn't

you

like to know."

"It's not like I need your money," I stuck out my tongue, leaning back to prevent the wet organ from touching his suddenly close proximity, "With how often you're at the gambling parlor, I don't think you have a job."

"Heh, you'd be right," The eldest flagged down a bartender, ordering another strong beer while Karamatsu switched to water, "What about you, sweetheart?"

"You could call me an advisor," A hum vibrated within my throat, my eyes switching between the two brothers, "People ask me for help, I give them advice, and they pay me."

"Sounds like someone we know," The second-eldest laughed, thanking the bartender and taking a large swig of the iced water, "We tried that kind of job before, but it didn't really work out."

I knew what they were insinuating, playfully nudging Osomatsu with my elbow, "Too much of a pain in the ass?"

Both men burst out laughing, the truth remaining unspoken.

I joined in their laughter, drinking the remainder of my water before I flinched at the sudden new color the clear liquid had turned: blue.

Panic began to fill my nerves, my eyes locked on the blue droplets clinging to what had been a half-full glass. I knew what the color meant -- my water had been drugged, which signaled that

someone

at the bar had ill intentions for me.

"Hey..." My hand found Osomatsu's, my fingers interlacing unintentionally as I tried to keep my emotions from flooding my face, "...can we leave?"

"But we're only on our second round," Karamatsu responded, the eldest's gaze frozen on our joined hands, "Getting scared of divulging something else you like about--(Y/n)?"

"Yeah...let's get you home," Osomatsu spoke softly, a grim expression resting on his face as he turned towards Karamatsu. I barely heard them talk, something about blue?

It

is

Karamatsu's favorite color.

I stood up from the barstool, abandoning the empty glass and walking towards the entrance, completely forgetting that I was holding hands with someone until my arm was yanked backwards. The person that had my hand pulled me close, their arms supporting my weight as I kept trying to leave.

The cool wind felt really nice on my overheated face, another pleased hum pulling itself from my throat as my feet moved themselves up into the air somehow. I closed my eyes as I relaxed into the curled up position, a soft heartbeat pressing against my left ear.

My head throbbed in pain, drawing a whimper from me as I pressed a hand against my forehead.

"Awake?" Someone spoke against the drumbeat, rustling fabric sounding close to me before I felt a cold cloth brush against my cheek and forehead as I lowered my hand, "Are you feeling better?"

"Karamatsu?" I struggled to open my eyes against the soft light cast on a familiar ceiling, "Am I...home?"

"Yeah," The second sextuplet leaned into view with a gentle smile, "We used your personal information card to find your apartment and your key to get in. Is that okay?"

"Mmhmm," I barely nodded against his hand, relishing the feeling of the cool cloth as it wiped away any sweat on my brow, "Did...anything happen?"

"No, nothing."

The furious blush across his cheeks stated otherwise.

"...what did I say?" I slowly sat up on my bed, taking the cloth in my own hands as Karamatsu released it while I moved.

His lips became a thin, taut line as he looked away, the blush never fading.

"You confessed that you loved us, even when we were in high school. There were some pretty intimate things said that we've never shared outside our family," Osomatsu's voice called from the doorway, my eyes lifting up to see the eldest brother leaning against the door jam with his arms crossed over his chest. The straight-faced expression didn't mask the partial glower in Osomatsu's gaze, "How do you know?"

I closed my eyes with resignation and lowered my head, opening my eyelids reluctantly while dropping the hand holding the cool damp cloth.

"I'm...not from this world."

Karamatsu's focus snapped back to me, the look of realization hard to miss from the corner of my eye.

"I'm from another version of this Earth; one where your reality is someone's creation for entertainment. Created and recreated for the enjoyment of everyone of any age," I didn't bother to hide my embarrassment as I pulled down the neckline of my shirt, revealing a tattoo.

I could feel the weight of their gazes, looking away without acknowledging their stares at the iconic pine bush heavily outlined in black and equally divided up into six parts with the different signature colors of each sextuplet. Underneath the pine bush was the Japanese hiragana of 'Matsuno'.

"...whoa."

I released my hold on the shirt's neckline, the fabric springing back into position, "I'm one of the people that thoroughly enjoy your animated show. Fell in love with six pieces of shit and fangirled at the artwork that other dedicated fans made. So...finding myself in the same world as you lot was a dream come true..."

"Is that why you were in that parlor?" Osomatsu's tone had softened, coming from somewhere nearby. I could only nod.

"(Y/n)," Karamatsu sounded calm, my skin flinching at someone's touch when a finger curled underneath my chin. I allowed them to move my head, raising my eyes to see both brothers looking right back at me, "You're not still under the effects of whatever drug you were given, are you?"

"No..." My gaze dropped, hoping that they weren't going to pin my insane ramblings on not being of sound mind.

The silence after my response was nearly deafening, Karamatsu's finger not leaving its position under my chin.

"Then...I'm very flattered to have someone like you as my

Karamatsu girl

."

My eyes flicked back up towards him as I caught Osomatsu groaning, his eye roll exaggerated.

"You don't think this is weird...?" I tentatively asked, both not wanting to hear the answer and desiring to hear them talk more.

"We embrace weird, (y/n). Have you ever

seen

our skits?" The oldest stuck his tongue out at me, "Do you know how long you have in this fictional world of ours?"

I shook my head hesitantly, sitting up and pulling my head from Karamatsu's touch, "I've been here for almost three weeks, and there's no indication if I'll even go back."

"An exotic tourist, then," The coy smirk resting on his lips drew a laugh from me.

"To be honest with you, (y/n), I've had a lot of fun being in your presence," Karamatsu leaned back on the bed, propping himself up with an arm, "You do owe us something, though."

"Oh..." My mind drifted back to the deal Osomatsu and I had made, "Something I like about Osomatsu?"

"Add me into the mix, too."

"Okay...I love that Karamatsu wears his heart on his sleeve yet remains steadfast about his brothers' wellbeing, and I love that Osomatsu never pushes his brothers too far whenever he teases them," I could feel my heart beat wildly in my chest as a look was exchanged between the two brothers, Osoamtsu joining his brother on the edge of my bed in a mirrored position, "...what?"

"What do you like about (y/n), Kara?" The oldest's eyes never left my face.

"I love that she didn't hesitate in helping our little brothers when they felt sick, even taking initiative in paying for the medications needed. What about you, big brother?"

"Boobs."

The curt answer drew a sharp laugh from me, my hand quickly lifting up and covering my mouth as I kept laughing. Both brothers joined in laughing, allowing it to carry on for as long as I needed while their lips were turned upwards in a smile.

"That's your answer for every woman you see," I managed between bouts, wiping away a tear as I regained my breath.

"It doesn't make it any less true," Osomatsu leaned in a little closer, our noses almost touching, "I love that you know how to read me, from the first moment we spoke to when you asked for help at the bar. You seemingly know when to talk about certain things, but

I

get the joy of discovering how you react to different scenarios."

His lips gently pressed into mine, his body moving forward and forcing me to move back until my spine was pressed against the wall alongside the bed. The action itself was welcome but I couldn't be sure if their minds were still hazy from the drinks, kissing Osomatsu back a few times before pulling away.

"Wait..." My voice was quiet in the still bedroom, "Is this...really what you want?"

Osomatsu sat back on his heels with a heated expression, kneeling on the bedspread as Karamatsu took his place.

The second-oldest's kiss was deeper than Osomatsu's, taking his time and enjoying the limited contact.

"Does that answer your question?" The eldest asked as he lifted my left hand up to his face, pressing his lips against my palm without breaking eye contact when Karamatsu had finished his kiss.

I could only nod before Karamatsu's hands were holding my head gently, tilting my head up for another kiss while I felt Osomatsu's lips travel up my arm with chaste touches. Relishing the attention I was receiving, I returned their affections with confidence: kissing Karamatsu back and inviting him to explore my mouth with his tongue while my fingers trailed down Osomatsu's abs as he began to work my shirt buttons free while lavishing my neck with his kisses.

The only inclination I had that I had changed positions was the fact that the back of my head sank into something soft, Karamatsu laying himself between me and the hard wall while Osomatsu lay on the other side to prevent me from rolling off onto the floor.

I thanked my past self for buying a larger western-style bed.

A surprised whine pulled itself from my throat as Osomatsu took over Karamatsu's kiss, his lips sealing over mine before his tongue dove deep

and pressed against mine. The second-oldest -- free from the kiss -- began his exploration of my body, his deft fingers rubbing over now-exposed skin. The shirt barely covered my chest, most of its buttons undone and pulled apart to show off the beige bra cupping my breasts.

I could feel the oldest smirk into the kiss as two hands began playing with the covered mammaries while a third hand dipped down towards the waistline of my pants, fingers slowly undoing the metal button before tugging down the zipper.

My hands lifted up, one ensnaring itself in Osomatsu's hair while the other followed the curve of Karamatsu's back until I touched his jeans waistline.

Osomatsu lightly moaned as he pulled away from my lips, his gaze flitting over my heated expression as a pleased smile tugging on his lips, "Do you know what I'm going to do next?"

"Ah...play with the boobs you love so much," I caught my breath, speaking past the sensation of the third hand slipping underneath my underwear. A finger began pressing against my entrance, not hard enough to push into it but giving enough pressure to ensure that I was aware of its position.

Osomatsu hummed with a smile, lowering his mouth to my chest and tugging down one of the bra cups with his teeth, "Good guess..."

I smothered a cry as his lips enclosed the suddenly exposed nipple while the finger pressed harder, pushing between my folds before zeroing in on my sensitive clit.

"What about me, (y/n)?" Karamatsu's voice was just as heated as Osomatsu's, the sound of my name on his lips arousing me further, "What am I going to do next?"

"You're...going to explore my body before Osomatsu has a...chance to," My throat tightened in pleasure as another finger joined the first, "Have...something to hold over him."

I whimpered as the bra was fully pulled down from my breasts as a fourth hand gently slid underwear and pants down my thighs.

"My

Karamatsu girl

is a wonderful guesser..." I felt his breath against my core before his tongue pressed against my entrance while both fingers began to build a rhythm.

With nothing else to hold on to, I raised my hands above my head and enjoyed every second they lavished onto me. Osomatsu suckled my breasts while slowly kneading them with his hands, Karamatsu between my thighs with my legs propped up on his back.

I wanted

more

.

I wanted to give

them

more.

"Please...allow me to get you ready."

Both brothers slowed their work before pulling away and standing next to the bed, their shared expressions showing excitement and anticipation while I squirmed out of my clothing.

As one, they undid their pants and revealed their undergarments: Osomatsu with a pair of white briefs, Karamatsu with sparkly blue boxer-briefs. I slid from my seated position on the bed and onto my knees in front of both men, my hands playing with the hem of each undergarment before lowering them down to reveal the treat hidden underneath.

Osomatsu's dick was all-around average, but that made it all the more enticing as his length barely twitched from the open air.

Karamatsu's had a little more girth while retaining the same length, his perky and more ready for action than the oldest's.

I gently held Karamatsu's penis in my right hand, thumbing the head before creating a slow-enough rhythm that would ensure he stayed ready while I gave Osomatsu's more attention. My tongue licked at the warm member from the base of the shaft to just underneath the head, repeating the motion until I heard Osomatsu's breath hitch before straightening the dick out and encompassing his second head with my mouth.

Karamatsu twitched in my hand, drawing a smile from me.

"Damn...you're better than an onahole..." Osomatsu couldn't -- or didn't want to -- hide his satisfaction, the whine in his voice a treat to hear.

After I ensured that Osomatsu was ready for the next step, I swallowed the accumulation of precum and saliva before switching to Karamatsu for a moment or so, taking enough time to apologize physically for not giving him as much attention.

Karamatsu's fingers intertwined themselves in my hair, moving my head at a pace he dictated while I felt Osomatsu leave my soft grip, another pair of hands traveling from my shoulders to my buttocks. I closed my eyes in anticipation for whatever the oldest sextuplet was wanting to do while getting onto my hands and knees, lightly moaning against Karamatsu's member when I felt two of Osomatsu's fingers dip into my entrance.

What I

wasn't

expecting was the full penetration shortly after, my pussy stretching wide before clamping down on the dick now inside me.

Osomatsu let out a satisfied moan, one of his hands reaching around to the front of my waist and curling down towards my clit, rubbing against the sensitive bud. He hadn't moved an inch yet.

"...really?" Karamatsu let out a scoff, his fingers loosening their grip so I could adjust my position. I gladly took the initiative and widened my stance on the floor, swallowing against his member and relishing the look of euphoria on the second-oldest's face, "Are you good with this, (y/n)?"

I could only hum, barely nodding my agreement while shifting my hips from side to side, drawing a swear from Osomatsu. He instantly grabbed my waist and fully hilted himself in me, knocking me forward a little into Karamatsu who had anticipated the movement.

"Naughty little (y/n)," Osomatsu growled in my ear, leaning over me so I could feel his body heat against my back. His hips slapped against mine as he found a rhythm to follow, his 'average' size being anything but, "You've been dreaming about this, haven't you?"

Being spit-roasted between two of my favorite characters drained any thoughts from my mind, numbly nodding at his taunt while I watched Karamatsu begin stripping off his hoodie and undershirt. The toned body underneath sent my nethers aflame, an amused grunt from Osomatsu indicating that he had

felt

it.

"Care to share, brother?" The expression on Karamatsu's face was one I had dreamed of seeing, his hooded lids and longer fringe creating a dark area that accentuated his sultry gaze. My nethers tightened at the sight of his tongue teasingly licking his top lip, "She looks ready for me."

"...yeah, she is," Osomatsu laughed as he slowly withdrew from me, leaning up and helping me off the floor and onto my bed. Both brothers maneuvered me into a position that had my head near the edge of the bed, and I instantly picked up the cues they set down.

Karamatsu pushed apart my legs a little wider and planted his knees on either side of my butt, letting my thighs rest on his while he angled himself for entry. I looked above me and happily took Osomatsu's slickened member into my mouth, cleaning up his precum and my juices while he pressed himself further into my throat.

A pair of hands played with my hair while the other pair began kneading my breasts, lightly pinching the erect nipples while I felt Karamatsu push himself into my quivering entrance, moaning at the action as I could feel his girth stretch my walls more than Osomatsu had.

He chose a slow rhythm, methodically moving his hips against mine while I orally tended to Osomatsu.

The hands on my breasts were replaced by something wet, my mind sparking as I clenched hard against Karamatsu. The wet things moved on their own, slightly bumpy but malleable; tongues.

A mouth on each breast, suckling each nipple.

My mind went blank, mindlessly performing every motion they pushed me into and enjoying the intense pleasure that my nerves were feeling.

Karamatsu's pace began to pick up, switching from slow and steady to nearly rapidfire, as Osomatsu's dick became harder in my mouth. They were close, too.

I encouraged them with a higher pitched whine, swallowing the excess saliva and precum building in my mouth around the member. They echoed the sounds, a warmth spilling deep into my throat as Osomatsu shoved my head fully against his waist, his pubes tickling my nose a little.

Karamatsu followed shortly after, crying out as he pumped once, twice before my womb became warm with heat. I didn't care if I ended up pregnant.

When I had finished swallowing Osomatsu's load, I cleaned off his member as thoroughly as I could before looking down to Karamatsu and offering the

same with a raise of an eyebrow. He barely shook his head as he pulled away from me, a smile resting on his lips.

"Well, fuck..." Osomatsu sat heavily next to me, catching my lips in a deep kiss, "Thanks for taking my V-card, (y/n)."

"Did I really?" I steadied my breathing as I sat up, not caring about my bare body remaining exposed to the two men.

"You're the one that knows us so well," Karamatsu sat on my other side, kissing me when Osomatsu pulled away, "You should know that answer."

"Then...what about the other four?"

A sly look fell on their faces while mine flushed.

"Wanna take theirs, too?"

"...if they still like me after getting to know me," I lowered my gaze, my hand pressing against my belly as the warmth remained.

"Get dressed, (y/n)," Osomatsu offered a wide smirk, "I know where Choromatsu is around this time of day."

I knew how brazen Osomatsu could be -- had seen it over and over in the anime -- but Karamatsu had barely left the two of us alone during the walk towards Choromatsu's presumed location when the oldest brother had grabbed my hand and pulled me into a narrow alley that only seemed to serve as that shady location when sexual acts were about to happen. My legs struggled to find stability before his free hand pulled my back against his chest, the dexterous fingers lightly pinching and teasing the still-sensitive nub through the bra and shirt. The hand that previously held my wrist found its way towards the front of my pants, deftly dipping underneath the waistline and brushed against my nethers.

"Hey...!" I muffled myself, silencing any heated moans that threatened to escape from my throat.

"Please..." Osomatsu's voice was low, his breath hot against my neck before his lips pressed onto the chilled skin, "Don't tell me you were completely satisfied with what just happened."

"There's...ah -- a time and place for this kind of thing, Osomatsu," My bottom lip became pinched between my teeth as I felt his index and middle fingers slip between my folds, thankful that he had dragged me far enough away from the alley's entrance that no one could really see us, "I don't think...fffuck...I don't think this is it."

He counteracted my point by pressing my backside against his waist, the firm bulge of his settling nicely in the crevice of my buttocks, "I'm hurt, (y/n). You said that you knew me so well. Don't deny that you had this fantasy when we were walking towards this place."

I couldn't deny it -- the image of having sex with one of the brothers here did cross my mind. I just wasn't anticipating it to be

now

.

The temperature around my waist suddenly cooled before I realized that the piece of shit had pulled my pants down

just enough

to reveal my core, sucking in a breath to rebuke the action when I felt him lift the jacket tied around my waist to press his bare length against my outer folds.

"I had this fantasy, too," His tongue licked up the nape of my neck, the words punctuated by the brush of his teeth against my skin, "Just indulge me this one time...?"

"...Do this again and I'll twist your dick so hard, you won't be able to use it for a month," I growled through clenched teeth, leaning over just enough to press my upper chest against the brick wall.

"Oh, sweetcheeks," Osomatsu bit down on my left shoulder, offering his own growl of pleasure, "Please do."

The fingers that had been playing with my entrance spread wide enough to open my core to his prodding length, pushing in just enough to be sure he had the right hole before completely filling me up. His now-free hand clamped down over my mouth, pulling back enough to brace my back against his body while Osomatsu picked a slow and steady rhythm.

The angle was more than enough, reigniting the flame within my core while he smothered my light moans and teased my right breast through the shirt, somehow working the bra cup below the nipple without removing the outer layer.

Another bite -- behind my right ear, this time -- caused my body to shudder, my walls clamping hard around his length as I raised my hands back towards his head. My fingers tugged a little on his dark locks, pulling his head forward as I turned back towards him.

Osomatsu caught my intention and captured my lips with his, deepening the kiss while continuing to push into me.

Each thrust of our joining sent me closer to the edge, my eyes closing as I embraced the feeling, wordlessly opening my mouth as Osomatsu fully pressed his length into me, his warm seed spilling into my waiting womb. He kissed me gently on the lips again, timed with another thrust that pressed our hips flush with each other, holding it for a moment before a third roll of his hips ensured his release remained within me.

"Easily better than the videos I've seen..." His breath brushed against my lips before he pressed his own against mine for another deep kiss, my gaze barely catching the mischievous glint within his hues.

Osomatsu wanted to go another round,

"You...wouldn't mind, would you?"

"I would, actually," I huffed in bemusement. The cool breeze slowly reminded him that we were still in a 'public' place, Osomatsu's blush spreading along his cheeks as he tucked himself away and allowed me to adjust my clothing.

He was the first to leave the alley, looking to the right before rolling his head in annoyance, "Ah, shit."

"...I suppose you're done, then?" Karamatsu's scoff sounded as I followed Osomatsu out, the second eldest sextuplet skeptically shaking his head.

"Hey -- when you get the urge, you just do it," Osomatsu shrugged, his trademark smirk firmly on his lips.

"Why do I not believe that..." Karamatsu huffed before turning his attention to me, "Are you okay?"

"Yeah...just taken back by the sudden 'event'. I'll get better as we move."

The tight-lipped frown fell from his face as he stepped between Osomatsu and I, draping an arm around my shoulders and pulling me with his stride, "If the lady says so. I've been able to deduce where Choromatsu has moved to while you were both 'busy', since his usual post at the local music studio was abandoned."

"Oh, his idol isn't playing?" The eldest sounded curious.

"Not today, I'm afraid. According to Totty's last update, Choromatsu is near the library with the intent to look at some self-help books."

"More of them?" I couldn't stop myself from partially rolling my eyes, "The poor guy has read enough to help several people."

Both brothers looked at me with a slightly impressed expression, catching my eye and encouraging my blush to spread across my face, "I mean...he wants to do the right thing but never takes the real first step."

"Oh, he'll love you," Osomatsu swooped around my position next to Karamatsu, leaning in close with a knowing grin.

"You're...both sure that I'm not stepping on any toes?" I lowered my gaze to the pavement beneath my feet, slowing down unintentionally.

"Why do you ask that?" Karamatsu lowered his arm from my shoulders, tilting his head away in question.

I kept my mouth shut, narrowing my gaze as the one woman that could pull these brothers away from me in an instant appeared in my head:

Totoko Yowai

.

The brunette idol/wanna-be millionaire had remained the sextuplets' love interest since their creation, the more recent anime reinforcing it as they ogled her at any opportunity they got -- especially when she was kicking the crap out of them for ignoring her.

She was the obstacle to me and I was terrified to meet her. Totoko appeared to be a solid friend when boundaries had become set...

but I had just slept with the two oldest sextuplets

.

Who knows how she'd react to news like that?

"(Y/n)?" Karamatsu asked, his index finger curling under my chin and drawing my focus from the ground to his colored contacts, "Would you rather relax for the rest of the day?"

"I can take her home," Osomatsu wrapped an arm around my waist, drawing me close against his body while he pressed his cheek against mine, "She'll be in good hands."

"That's exactly what I'm afraid of," Karamatsu grabbed Osomatsu's left wrist, twisting it sharply and pulling the eldest away from me. The oldest brother yelped in pain, whimpering as he shook feeling back into the freed

wrist while the second-eldest cast a soft gaze back at me, "It's up to you, (y/n)."

"I mean...there's no pressure for me to meet the other Matsunos today, right? I'll just take a wander around the ward. If I bump into another brother, then I'll see if they're in the mood for socializing," I turned towards both brothers, their focus steady and focused on me.

"What about means of communication? Do you have a mobile phone?" The blue clothed brother asked.

"I've honestly been so wrapped up with finding you that I didn't focus on anything else," I shook my head with slightly pursed lips. While I had my own phone in the real world, nothing I had owned made the transition with me.

"How about using some of those gambling winnings to buy one?" Osomatsu propped up an elbow on Karamastu's shoulder, leaning against the younger while crossing a leg, "When you get one, find us at the fishing hole or pachinko parlor and we'll trade numbers."

"You don't have phones," I barely raised an eyebrow, "Only Todomatsu does."

"True, but we use it when we're all together. Besides, he won't notice another girl's name in his contacts."

"...You know that I'll be taking pictures of you guys nonstop, right? You're okay with that?"

Osomatsu's only response took the form of pursed lips while making a heart with his hands, Karamatsu shaking his head incredulously as he rolled his eyes at the action.

I laughed at the action, waving farewell as I turned from the library.

By the time the sun lifted itself high into the blue sky, I had wandered to every landmark that had been shown in the animated series; enjoying the

fishing by the stocked piers, taking a leisurely walk around the playground that was surrounded by a walking trail, stopping by the pachinko parlor for a few more lucky rounds (where I had won another ¥10,000) and using some of the funds to buy myself a simple cellphone with a pretty good plan, speedwalking past Dekapan's lab, and watching the fish shop that Totoko Yowai's family owned from a distance.

While seeing the locations with my own eyes was pleasant, there was definitely a feeling that always seemed to hover over my shoulders. It was weird seeing all these places

without

the sextuplets somewhere nearby, like the world I was walking in was

meant

for them.

I scoffed with a smile on my face,

Of course it is. This is their...world.

My eyes fell from the busy street scenery to my feet slowing on the sidewalk, the smile sliding into a sour frown.

Did 'their world' have room for me in it?

Jyushimatsu had Homura, the brothers vied for Totoko's attention, Choromatsu was devout to Nyaa-chan.

How many more girls could the brothers handle?

Hell, I

just

had sex with the two older brothers and they seemed pleasant afterwards (foregoing Osomatsu's urges). Maybe I could live alongside them as a

friend rather than someone they adored.

That would be enough, right?

"Hustle, hustle!" A familiar chant drew my attention to the unexpected park across the street, seeing a man dressed in a yellow baseball uniform pump his right arm up in the air as he was followed by a slouching figure donned in a purple sweatshirt, "Muscle, muscle!"

Oh, this I had to see.

I knew the two familiar identical men: Jyushimatsu is the hyperactive fifth brother, and Ichimatsu is the introverted anti-social cat lover.

My feet made my decision for me, crossing the street safely and moving into the ballpark as the yellowed baseball player began to start practicing, tossing a ball up and swinging the bat as hard as he could before watching the path he carved into the sky.

"...you're sure that you're okay to do this?" The dark question could only come from Ichimatsu, spotting him trotting towards where the ball had fallen, picking it up and bringing it back with a tired shuffle of his feet, "You were just sick yesterday."

"I couldn't do anything, so I need to make it up today! 2,000 swings!" '

Clang

' went another baseball, "Yeah, 2,000 should do it."

"...you're a monster," Ichimatsu muttered as he fetched the balls before he ultimately gave up chasing every ball, only wandering out every twenty hits or so.

I found a park bench conveniently positioned in the shade of a nearby evergreen, thankful for the seat as I watched the two brothers interact from a distance. The studio staff had never fully dedicated an episode to just these two sextuplets for this activity, usually teasing the audience with snippets of Jyushimatsu haphazardly swinging his bat repeatedly with

Ichimatsu tied to it as a training weight of sorts, the older of the two seemingly enjoying the masochistic ritual through his suffering.

Ichimatsu let the spare baseballs Jyushimatsu had run low before he went out to the outfield to gather the loose ones, and I found a good moment to naturally approach the two when a stray ball soared through the air towards my bench.

I picked it up after it rolled to a stop at my feet, impressed by the strength behind the swing that sent it flying nearly two baseball field lengths to the closest treeline.

"I think you're gonna need this one!" I shouted out as I waved the ball above my head, lightly jogging over to the pair. Ichimatsu's eyes became hidden by the shadow of his bangs, Jyushimatsu's smile stretched wider before he closed his eyes and gave a hearty laugh while holding the bat like a cane in front of him.

"Thanks!" Jyushimatsu responded as I came closer, a heavy feeling pressing on my shoulders when I handed the loose baseball over to its owner, "I guess I got distracted."

"It was quite the hit to make it that far," I offered a smile, letting my now-empty hand fall back to my side, "If you're not a professional player, you definitely should be."

I didn't miss the flinch of their shoulders, Ichimatsu glancing away before he trudged towards the metal audience stands next to the field Jyushimatsu was using. My eyes followed his movements for a little bit before Jyushimatsu lifted the baseball to me, grabbing my attention again.

"Want to throw some?"

"I can try," I graciously took the baseball and turned it over in my hands a few times, looking from the object to the man, "I mean...it's been a while since I played any sports."

"Just try!" He smiled while backing up to home plate, resting the bat over his shoulder before taking a stance and readying himself, "Give it 110%!"

I nearly dry heaved as I bent over on the pitcher's mound, my mouth feeling cracked as my throat ached for water.

The baseball monster known as Jyushimatsu had achieved his target 2,000 swings...and added another 500 before I begged for it to stop. Granted, nearly half of the original target was done by Ichimatsu, but the rest was brutal with the older brother counting out every one-hundred swings.

"One more, one more!" Jyushimatsu laughed from home plate, tapping its surface with the baseball bat and readying for another pitch.

"You said that...last pitch..."

"This time is a promise," His smile was infectious, lifting my spirits up and causing my heart to race enthusiastically in hopes that he was telling the truth, "I'll never get better if I don't push my limits."

"It's...my limits that I'm worried about, dummy..." I whispered under my breath before clutching the baseball in my hand tighter, straightening up and turning into the throw. As the hide ball left my fingertips, I could feel that this one was gonna go wild, sucking in a breath and watching Jyushimatsu's eyes widen as he made the same realization.

In a quick motion, he spaced out his hands on the bat and bunted the ball aimed for his chest, the object making a sharp noise in protest as the ball ricocheted against the dirt and soared into a high arc.

My feet started towards the baseball, begrudgingly moving towards the stands where Ichimatsu remained sitting.

He watched without emotion as it flew down towards him, my mouth opening in warning before the ball landed behind him, somehow missing the dark idiot completely.

I huffed in amusement at how the scene could've played out in the anime series, the baseball smacking Ichimatsu in the face or something.

"You okay?" I asked as I slowed near the stands, planting my hands on my hips while regaining my breath.

Ichimatsu opened his mouth to respond.

A soft mewl cried out somewhere under the bench he was sitting on.

Our focus snapped to the newcomer, him lowering his head between the gaps in the metal stand while I fell to my knees and pressed my head against the grass to peer underneath.

A kitten -- no more than a few months old -- arched its back and had already fluffed up its tail in response to the baseball surprising it, taking a sideways step before falling over against the ball and bolting back up into its 'aggressive' stance.

"...oh!" The word slipped between my lips as I moved closer into a more favorable position, my fingers gently reaching out and brushing against the kitten's bristled fur. It ignored me for a few seconds before I pushed a little harder against its side, drawing its gaze and revealing its face to me.

The poor thing was sick, its eyes bearing the tell-tale signs of an upper respiratory infection while its little nose was shinier than it should've been.

It needed help. I was the only one of the three adults to have money, so it fell to me to do something.

"Jyushimatsu," I called out as I cradled the kitten close to my chest, using the light jacket I had previously tied around my waist as insulation to keep the kitten warm from the cooler-than-normal day. The mentioned brother reacted to his name with a questioning tone, "I need to stop throwing for you. This one needs my help."

Jyushimatsu glanced from me to the kitten in my arms, lightly nodding.

I raked my memory of the day, remembering that I had passed an emergency vet clinic on the way to the park, whispering to the kitten that it would be okay and I'd do everything to help it. Stray or not, I could never ignore a sick animal.

I waited as patiently as I could in the clinic's lobby, my fingers curling around themselves before unraveling to repeat the motion. I had already looked through my phone to distract myself, but it was just something that I couldn't focus on, eventually looking around and studying what I could understand.

The clinic's front door opened, a familiar purple shadow walking in before his dark gaze landed on me. The emotionless look immediately dropped into a furious glare, our eyes locked.

"You piece of trash."

The insult threw me off, blinking a few times to try and reset my thoughts, "...what?"

"You heard me," Ichimatsu scoffed before sitting on the same bench, albeit on the other end nearly four feet away from me, "What kind of monster just rips a child away from its mother."

A bundle of gray and white in his arms caught my eye, the shades standing out against his purple sweatshirt: an adult cat, appearing healthy despite some dirt along its face, stared back at me with blue-green eyes. It seemed content to rest in Ichimatsu's arms, lowering its head onto his forearm when he settled on the bench.

"...a monster that didn't pay attention to her surroundings," My eyes hooded in disappointment, wishing that I had looked before running away with the kitten, "I just wanted to help the kitten, and it...it looked like mine did before he died. I got scared."

"You...had a cat?"

"For most of my life," A gentle smile rested on my lips as I fondly remembered the orange tabby, a white streak tracing its chin before zipping over its left shoulder and up its tail, "He...passed on a few years ago. Old age and the weakened immune system that comes with it."

The purple brother hummed quietly in thought, "How old?"

"He had turned twenty-six," I took a deep breath to pull myself from the flashbacks, looking over at Ichimatsu cradling the mother cat, "Though, I'm sure that you would've had a similar response to me, Ichimatsu."

"...maybe, but I wouldn't have brought them to a vet first," He leaned against the wall as his fingers gently rubbed the top of the momma cat's head, his thumb gently pinching one of her ears between it and his index finger to give it a massage, "I don't really have the funds to provide this kind of service for them."

I only nodded my head, knowing that he wasn't stretching the truth. From what I could recall of the show, Ichimatsu spent a lot of his money giving the local stray and feral cats food and treats so they could have an easier life.

"This situation does bring up an...

interesting

thought, though..." The tone Ichimatsu used caught my attention, indicating that he was more than just curious.

I raised my eyes to look at his, the dark hues boring into my soul.

"

How the hell do you know our names?

"

The blood drained from my face, my vision shaking a little as anger rolled off his body in waves. My hands clasped each other tightly while I

struggled to breathe normally. I didn't realize that I had slipped up, understanding that both Ichimatsu and Jyushimatsu had never said each other's names while I watched them.

"I..." Finally able to tear my eyes from his visual grip, I lowered my head a little, "I know you and Jyushimatsu...well, I know all of the Matsuno brothers from when we attended high school."

He gave no clue that I could feed off of, swallowing hard and continuing my white lie.

"I was never in your class and had moved away shortly before graduation, so it's okay that you don't know me. The six of you always stuck out in my mind because I found your prankster antics funny," I heard a long exhale from him, "I remember my high school self as being really embarrassing, so those memories with you guys gave me something good from those years."

"...why move back?" Ichimatsu rested his head against the wall, his eyes still regarding my form as I looked over at him once more, "Nothing really special here."

"I missed Akatsuka Ward--"

"I mean, why seek us out?" He clenched his jaw, lifting his top lip in a sneer that I knew wasn't directed at me, "We're six pieces of shit."

"You're the one that called me 'trash' earlier," I quipped with a small smile, "Shouldn't I seek out my own kind?"

He appeared stunned, a tiny amused smile tugged at his lips before it was smothered.

"I've already met up with Osomatsu and Karamatsu a few hours ago," I fought down the blush at the memory, "and I hope to see Choromatsu and Todomatsu while still here."

"...they're around."

"Can I guess?"

His eyelids hooded, an unspoken permission granted.

"Let's see. Todomatsu is...holding a job somewhere, and Choromatsu is putting his nose into books without giving much actual effort?"

Ichimatsu didn't offer a response.

"Am I close?"

"There's something about you that I don't like."

My mouth remembered how dry it was, "S-such as...?"

"You were watching Jyushimatsu and I the entire time we were on the field, sitting on the shaded bench that just so happened to be recently installed a few weeks ago," The timeline he gave matched with when I had arrived in this animated world, "No one has sat in it before now...but

you

decide to plop your ass down and stare like we were ants in your magnifying glass. Osomatsu and Karamatsu had both talked about taking someone they knew to a bar for a drink, forbidding the rest of us from joining by telling us the wrong place. I can only hazard a guess that

you

were the drinking buddy, considering the timing. You knew how to handle Jyushimatsu, how to ease my burden...you knew how to stand and position yourself so you didn't arouse him too much."

My mind snapped back to when I had been throwing baseballs for Jyushimatsu, his stance becoming more and more hard to control since he popped a boner when I had accidentally jumped up to catch a ball sailing right over my head. My shirt must've flown up higher than I realized, yet I pointedly ignored the growing tent in the baseball player's pants when I realized that Jyushimatsu had become excited.

"You're creepy as hell," Ichimatsu's pointed teeth gnashed as his eyes narrowed at whatever expression I was making, his reaction fueling me to make a neutral face, "I don't even think you went to the same high school as us."

I braced myself with a deep inhale, "You're right. What I've done sounds worse. I've been watching you six for the past few years, laughing and enjoying your NEET moments while crying when you've been affected by real life beating you down. I was able to watch moments from your past, going through my own embarrassing moments while you had yours."

Ichimatsu only stared at me, his eyes partially widening.

Settling into a leaning position, I turned my head to fully look at him, "Want me to continue?"

"...so you're a stalker."

"Worse. I'm someone who loves six pieces of shit."

The sudden shift from confusion to disgust was amusing to watch, "Fucking why."

"Because despite being at the absolute bottom rung of society, you're more comforting than the others who claim to be better," My eyes flicked towards the exam room's door, "I've seen men who claim to be gentlemen abuse those they love, read about people who turn on their spouses just for a quick drug high. At least with you six...I know what I'm getting into."

The door I had been watching finally opened, spurring me to sit up straight again as the vet emerged from the room holding the swaddled kitten from before.

"Ms. (L/n)?"

"Yes," I stood at my name.

"Thankfully, it was only dehydrated," They placed the kitten back in my arms while speaking, "We were able to give it fluids and a general health

check, but were unable to find anything that was an immediate need. Is there a place where you can house it?"

Ichimatsu stood up, his desire to take care of the kitten evident on his face before realization caused the emotion to fall. The mother cat called out from his arms, drawing the kitten's attention with a response.

"I'm allowed to have pets in my apartment," I nodded when Ichimatsu withdrew into himself, "I'll take the mother and kitten there."

"Great. Ensure that both mother and kitten get enough appropriate food and water."

With the mother cat and kitten safely housed in a cardboard carrying box, my apartment key slid home in the lock before I turned it open, "You didn't have to follow me home, you know."

Ichimatsu didn't respond as he placed the paper bags holding food, toys, and cat beds down in the mud area right in front of the door. He didn't step in.

"You...you're able to come in, if you want," I set the box down closer to the kitchen, lowering the empty litter bin tucked underneath my other arm, "I'm sure the cats wouldn't mind."

When I had turned around to see what the fourth sextuplet was doing, I was greeted with an empty doorframe.

Letting out a soft hum, I gently closed the door to my apartment.

He'd reach out when he was ready...if that's what he wanted.

The knock on my front door wasn't expected, drawing my tired attention as I rubbed my eyes free of sleep.

With the kitten and mother cat now living in my apartment, I had been up late into the night to ensure that they were bathed, fed, given clean water,

and allowed some roam of the place. When I finally managed to fall asleep, the kitten's mewling woke me back up.

I hadn't had a chance to get ready for the day, my loose pajama shirt draping past my waist while the form-fitting shorts ensured that my nethers were covered, my hair still pressed in odd angles while my feet were bare against the cool floorboards.

"...yeah?"

My first mistake was not waking up earlier.

My second mistake was opening the door wide to reveal the two sextuplets standing in front of my apartment door.

My third mistake was opening my mouth in a mixture of surprise and arousal, "Oh...if it isn't Ichimatsu and Jyushimatsu."

The fourth sextuplet stood with his mouth agape, eyes wide as he regarded my state...the fifth brother had an erection that couldn't be hidden, his lips spread open in a wide smile.

"Baseball lady!"

"Good morning, Jyushimatsu," I returned before faltering a little, "...or is it afternoon already?"

"...afternoon," Ichimatsu corrected as he turned his face away, "Just after 2 p.m."

"Then afternoon it is. Care to come in?" Stepping back into the main common room of my apartment, I made sure that the newly 'adopted' cats were out of the way so they didn't dash out the door, "I can make some tea if you'd like."

"Why did you run away yesterday?" Jyushimatsu had already kicked off his slippers and made himself at home on the sofa, his curious eyes catching a glimpse of the cats and pulling up his longer sleeves to offer his hand for them to smell.

"Ichimatsu and I found these girls under the audience stand he was sitting on," After ensuring that the mentioned brother had closed the door behind him, I began boiling a water kettle on the range with hopes to make some hot cocoa or tea for us to enjoy while I tested the waters. My eyes narrowed in thought as I verbally rambled about what had happened between the baseball field and the vet clinic.

Should I try...with these two? They were as much of a virgin as their other brothers (barring the older two now), but this was Ichimatsu and Jyushimatsu I was thinking about.

One was seen by the fandom as an absolute boy of sunshine while the other bore a fragile heart hidden by a vast darkness.

The erection that Jyushimatsu had couldn't be taken as a sign of readiness: the poor guy got this excited over the idea of going to a mixer with Todomatsu and some random girls.

I suppressed the laugh at the depiction of Jyushimatsu completely submerged in an ice bath to try and cool off his excitement.

"You're being inappropriate."

The curt comment from Ichimatsu stirred me from my thoughts, finding myself pouring three cups of green tea.

"In what way?" I barely looked over my shoulder to see him glaring at me from across the open room. His dark hues narrowed more when we made eye contact.

"You don't have any shame in the way you dress."

"I had a busy night making sure that the cats were happy with everything I had bought them," Focusing back on the tea, I carried the cups out to the small table in front of the sofa, "I'm just lucky that I didn't have work today."

"Your advisor job?"

"So you are familiar with it," I caught the snarky tone Ichimatsu used.

"We were told."

"Did your brothers tell you anything else?" Bringing a cup up to my lips, I gently blew across the tea to cool it just a little before taking a sip. It wasn't boiling hot, which meant that I had made it correctly.

"Did you have sex with Osomatsu and Karamatsu?" Jyushimatsu blurted out, his near-shout driving the cats away in shock.

My face flushed instantly, not expecting

him

of the brothers to be blunt about the subject, "I, uhh...yeah."

"Then they graduated from being a virgin?"

I could only nod, taking a large sip of the tea in an attempt to hide my flustered look. Jyushimatsu let out a breathy laugh while Ichimatsu made no audible hints as to what he was thinking, the partial glare still resting on his brow.

"You should be ashamed...What kind of woman would even consider sleeping with us, let alone at the same time?" The older sextuplet growled in disapproval, drawing my gaze towards him, "Tell whomever paid you to get a refund."

"No one coerced me into sleeping with them," Sitting the ceramic cup down on the table, I shifted to fully look at Ichimatsu while casting my own narrowed gaze, "If you're thinking that I'm someone who will use you brothers to further my own agenda, you're wrong."

"Then that makes you a slut."

The term flew from Ichimatsu's lips carelessly, his tongue clicking against his cheek immediately after as he averted his gaze from mine. He knew he had crossed the line, but wasn't willing to apologize for it.

I took a slow, deep breath in through my nose, "...is that truly what you think I am?"

His eyes narrowed further, Jyushimatsu's mouth dropping the smile as a look of concern swept over his expression as he turned towards his brother.

"Ichimatsu..."

"Shut up."

"Don't be rude when you're called out, Ichimatsu," I quipped, finishing off my tea before pushing a full cup towards him, "You're being inappropriate."

He visibly stuttered at the phrase I threw back at him, quickly looking towards me before glancing at Jyushimatsu. The younger brother took the cup set in front of him and drank heartily from it, letting out an exclamation of 'delicious!' when he placed the empty vessel back down.

Hesitantly, Ichimatsu took the offered cup with a shaky hand, his eyes darting towards me before lowering his shaking gaze to the green liquid.

"It's not poisoned," I lightly scoffed, leaning back as my eyes shifted away to make him less nervous.

"...shut up," He cautiously pressed his lips to the rim, seemingly taking a few sips before setting the cup back down on the table. I was surprised to see it empty, "Happy now?"

"I want an apology for what you called me," Standing up and gathering the empty ceramic cups, I spoke while walking towards the kitchen, "If you do, then I'll tell you what I told your brothers."

"You're lying," Ichimatsu spat out, never turning around to watch me.

"Is it really so unbelievable that a woman of my standing is willing to sleep with not one, but two NEETs? Someone willing to sleep with the Matsuno sextuplets?"

"What about us six pieces of shit makes you think you can make a move?"

"Says the one with the fragile, chipped heart," I rolled my eyes before walking back towards the sofa, confidently sitting between the brothers, "You've been the best one at reading people, Ichimatsu, yet you're refusing to see what's in front of you. I know that you've built up this dark persona that acts completely anti-social, celebrating all things horror and dangerous. Hell, your dream job is to become a prison guard."

The sudden accumulation of sweat on Ichimatsu's brow was entertaining, his eyes widening as I spoke of something he only divulged to Choromatsu when they were alone in the house. Jyushimatsu smothered a laugh behind me.

"I understand you, Ichimatsu. I understand all of you," I glanced to my left and gave a wink at Jyushimatsu, "I know that

you've

had a boner since I opened the door."

"...sorry," The younger brother looked away as a sheepish grin tugged at his lips, a heavy blush rising on his cheeks, "You're really pretty."

"Thanks, Jyushima--" My gratitude was smothered by his lips pressing against mine, Jyushimatsu leaning in quickly and pressing my back against the sofa cushion.

"Jyushimatsu!" Ichimatsu cried out, pushing him away from me, "What the hell are you doing?!"

"(Y/n) is nice, big brother. I trust her," He looked a little offended at the opposing action, a frown playing on his lips.

I remained silent, completely taken off-guard by the action Jyushimatsu had taken as I raised a hand to slightly cover my mouth.

"Just because someone's nice doesn't mean that it's okay to do something like that! She could be using us."

Ichimatsu's words caught my attention, my eyes partially hooding in a challenge.

"If I am using you, wouldn't it be beneficial for you to lose your 'V' cards while ensnared in my schemes? You'd gain something inconsequential to me."

"You think I'd willingly let you take my Cherry Boy status?" Ichimatsu leaned back, a disgusted grimace resting on his lips.

"I only partake in 'willing'," I moved away from him, feeling my butt wedge against Jyushimatsu's crossed legs, "When I have sex, I want those participating to want it, too."

Ichimatsu choked at the confession, his eyes white in shock.

Jyushimatsu took advantage of my expression of concern, his hands reaching around and grabbing my breasts from behind, "I'm willing, so let's have some fun."

A soft whimper left my lips as I looked over my shoulder to Jyushimatsu, his lips colliding again with my own while pulling me onto his lap. Any moans I made were swallowed by Jyushimatsu, his deft fingers cradling and squeezing my breasts under the thin sleeping shirt. He bucked against my butt, his swollen member pressing as far as his shorts would let it while the length settled between my lower cheeks.

"You guys are freaks," Ichimatsu scoffed, turning his head away in a huff.

I pulled my lips from the needy kiss to gaze at the older sextuplet, "Yet you're still sitting on the sofa, Ichimatsu. Did you just want to watch?"

He flinched harshly, his dark hues sweeping back and meeting mine with wide eyes.

It was obvious what he was thinking, how wretched he would be if he just watched...how much he would regret it if he didn't participate.

My sleeping shirt was lifted above my head, tossed onto the floor as Jyushimatsu's hands gently grabbed my breasts and pulled me closer to him.

"Don't worry yourself about Ichimatsu, (y/n)," His breath danced over my lips while he lay chaste kisses on my neck. I could feel the smirk against my skin, "

I'm

the one giving you attention now."

"The jealous type?" My question was airy, sucking in a sharp inhale as one of Jyushimatsu's hands wandered down into my shorts. Two of his fingers immediately plunged into my core without foreplay, the movement mirrored by his waist, "I guess so..."

Jyushimatsu captured my lips again from behind, my arms now pinned underneath his passionate hug. With every dive his fingers made, I could feel myself growing closer to an orgasm and let both men know it through my moans.

A third hand squeezed my free nipple, the attention catching me off-guard for a moment before a second pair of lips nibbled on my neck. I caught a glimpse of purple from the corner of my eye.

Ichimatsu's second hand replaced Jyushimatsu's in my shorts, pulling the garment down and exposing my nethers to the open air.

The younger one made a squeal of excitement before I felt something solid and hot where I had felt only hardness before, his hands releasing their grip on my body before lifting my waist up, "Me first, me first!"

I had no time to ask what he meant before his thick member prodded at my butt, immediately pulling my waist downward while he rolled his hips up.

The penetration fucking

hurt

.

Ichimatsu caught my lips mid-scream while his fingers dove deep between my inner folds, wiggling around a little before pulling out and rubbing something slick around my stretched and abused second entrance. He repeated the motion again as Jyushimatsu pulled himself out with a happy groan, the second thrust smoother than the first as the dry skin-on-skin resistance faded.

"Dumbass..." He growled into the kiss before pulling away, his lips and tongue trailing down to my chest. My breasts became the focus of his attention while the other began picking up the pace, his teeth biting down on my right shoulder and sucking harshly. Ichimatsu tugged the underwear and shorts off my legs completely, leaving me nude before he barely lowered his sweatpants to reveal the semi-soft shaft of his penis, "You should know what to do..."

I gently leaned forward to place my hands on his waist, Jyushimatsu scrambling to keep himself inside me while I changed positions. When I had settled on my knees, he picked up the pace again and created a steady rhythm that I used to prepare Ichimatsu.

The feeling of his hardening dick in my mouth was one I had always fantasized about, its length pressing against the back of my throat while its new girth allowed very little wiggle room for my tongue. With the pace of the younger brother, I moaned against Ichimatsu and reveled in the whines he reciprocated with.

Jyushimatsu must've become impatient with how fast things were progressing, pulling me off of Ichimatsu and shifting low enough to where he was now laying underneath me, his hands forcing my knees to spread wide. The vulnerable position wasn't what I was expecting, the surprised mewl from my throat spurring Ichimatsu closer as he pressed his waist against mine.

He leaned over me, my hands now gripping his sweatshirt like a lifeline, and smothered my lips in a heated kiss. His teeth nibbled on my bottom lip,

his fingers wrapping around my breasts and squeezing them, his waist grinding against mine without entering.

I moved my hips in time with Jyushimatsu's fierce thrusting, crying into the kiss as I felt him become more desperate. A burst of heat exploded within me, what felt like thick ropes cascading deep inside before something else shoved itself deep within my core.

Two different rhythms, two similar girths.

Two men echoing my calls of lust.

This was better than I could ever imagine.

Ichimatsu bit down hard on my right collarbone, the bite mirrored by Jyushimatsu as their fingers pinched and pulled at whatever soft flesh they could find while I remained pinned between them. Someone had my breasts, someone else had my lips, and I would've sworn there was a third pushing their fingers into my entrance along with Ichimatsu's length.

Jyushimatsu's breathing hitched, his teeth grabbing the side of my neck as his pacing quickened, another feeling of heat filling me up before Ichimatsu announced his ejaculation with a heated cry.

Yet, they both continued to use and abuse me.

Four, five, six times each of them had dumped their load into my belly and butt, the sensation now reaching uncomfortable limits as my body continued to ride the lustful high they had given me.

I blinked, blanked out with Jyushimatsu positioned behind me with Ichimatsu underneath me. Another blink, Jyushimatsu was using my mouth to clean himself while Ichimatsu had unlimited reign of which entrance to use. A third blink, Ichimatsu was on top of me while holding my right leg against his chest, the wet sound of skin slapping on skin spurring my arousal even more.

I felt hot, overheated by the warmth being pumped into me.

It was only when a cool glass of water pressed against my forehead that I realized the session had finished, taking the glass with a trembling hand and drinking greedily of the contents.

"...feeling better?"

I recognized the husky voice of Ichimatsu, slowly sitting up and wincing at the soreness of my neck, shoulders, back, and waist, "Was I in a fight?"

"We...marked you up pretty good, didn't we?" A gentle hand brushed against my neck, sweeping away my hair to get a better look, "That wasn't our intention..."

"It's fine," I laughed before finishing off the glass, "I'm a fast healer, so they should be gone in a few days."

I struggled to stand on my own, feeling a pair of hands help me up before looking to see Ichimatsu with a worried expression, his sweatpants and undergarments back on his body. He seemed more timid after the sex.

"What about you? Are you feeling better?"

His dark eyes remained downcast, a small frown tugging at his lips, "I'm...sorry about what I said earlier."

"You'll make up for it," Somehow I made it to the kitchen to put away the previously used cups, feeling someone's presence behind me as I moved, "I, however, need to get cleaned off from...what happened."

"Would you...like some help?"

"Is your intent to have more sex with me?" I raised an eyebrow as the fourth sextuplet became my shadow, following me towards the restroom.

He shook his head, "Not at all. If I want more sex...it can wait until you've recovered."

"What about Jyushimatsu?" Shifting my gaze behind him, I only saw an empty common room with the cats resting on the rocking chair near the

corner.

"He left already, had something to take care of."

"If you promise to not pounce on me, I'll let you help," I couldn't withhold a gentle smile as Ichimatsu's furry ears perked up from underneath his hair, a small look of appreciation covering his expression.

True to his promise, Ichimatsu didn't take advantage of my trust, only laying chaste kisses on my skin as he scrubbed my back and hair.

Quietly watching the mother cat carry her kitten off by the scruff at the baseball field, I let out a long sigh through my nose.

Five days of eating heartily, drinking plenty, and sleeping soundly (besides a few frightened episodes from the kitten) had paid off and I thought it best to release them back where Ichimatsu and I had found them. The cardboard carrying box the vet had put them in now lay empty.

I lowered my gaze from the far side of the park, shifting my focus to the pitcher's mound.

Five days since I had last seen any of the Matsuno sextuplets, my sparse text messages being left on 'read' and causing me to wonder if the number Ichimatsu had given me was the right one.

My hands lifted up and rubbed against my upper arms, fighting off an imagined chill. Even though it was late spring in Japan, I had dressed warmly in a long sleeved shirt with a wide neck hem in my favorite color while a comfortable pair of jeans hugged my lower limbs.

"May as well explore again," I muttered to myself as I stretched from sitting down for almost an hour, waiting patiently for the cats to leave of their own volition. Maybe I'd get lucky and come across the brothers?

My face paled as a group of people walked on the other side of the street, six men crowding around a single woman.

The Matsuno sextuplets were easy to spot, their technicolor scheme standing out amongst the gray suits and washed colors of the crowd, yet the person they walked with could've been mistaken for a bystander in the animated show for any first-time viewer.

The brown hair tied into twin pigtails by two little yellow ribbons, the cute and girly hot pink headband that perfectly matching the long sleeved turtleneck shirt tightly clinging to her figure, a green-and-tan plaid short shirt only hiding the last few inches of her legs while a pair of strap high heels (the same pink as the shirt) covered her feet.

She was the one person that I was still unsure of if I should meet, the same person that had enraptured the six brothers since childhood and brushed off their obvious intentions to only tease them with it suited her whims: Totoko Yowai.

I could hear her clear laugh ringing through the air like clandestine bells, the sound echoed by six other voices laughing at some joke they had shared only moments before I saw them.

Osomatsu and Karamatsu led the other four in two rows next to Totoko, forming a barrier and aisle of sorts as she decided where she wanted to go.

My feet stopped walking as I meekly watched them pass on the opposing sidewalk, my chest torn between excitement and pain. I knew what today was for the group, knew how endearing it was for the brothers to dedicate the entire day to be at Totoko's beck and call for hauling her purchased goods.

I longed to be a part of it, yet I hated to see their desires and efforts be wasted on someone that obviously had no intention of allowing their affection to move further than a friend.

With a heavy sigh, I began to turn away from where they were heading.

This wasn't the first time Totoko's shopping day interfered with interacting with the brothers and it definitely wouldn't be the last. She was a part of their world.

With one last glance over my shoulder, I barely saw the excited wave from Jyushimatsu and partial salute from Karamatsu through the tears that began to crowd my vision. Lifting a hand in dismissal, I tried to make it clear that I wouldn't interject with their day.

After all, I was the luckiest fan of the entire Osomatsu-san fandom. Others could have their artistic talent for writing or drawing, manipulating 3D models into skits or dances, pitching and coding their voices into songs or phrases...I was

here

. I could see them in person, touch them if they allowed it...hell, I've had sex with four of them!

This was enough...it

should

be enough for me.

I pulled out my phone with the intention to erase Todomatsu's phone number until I felt my right shoulder being jostled harshly, my cell phone dropping from my soft grip as apologies stuttered from my lips.

"What the hell, lady?" A gruff voice barked out, my gaze lifting to see a handful of tough-looking men gather near me. Each of them had some wild haircut, bore some kind of tattoo on their exposed lower arm, neck, or face, and a few had scars, "You bump into me with that much force? I think my shoulder's bruised."

"Wha--No, I just--" The accusation caught me off-guard, unconsciously taking a step away from the group only for them to close the distance.

"What are you gonna do if my brother can't do his job properly because of the injury you gave him?" Another pressed, a sneer pulling at his features.

"A mere brush won't bruise anything," I tried to defend myself, my mind catching onto what they were trying to do. I had read it many times before

in stories.

"You don't know that for sure! What are you, a doctor?" A third man questioned, pointing a finger at me, "You better pay for his hospital bill!"

"There won't be a bill because I know you won't get it looked at," My back bumped into a solid surface, my hands splaying to feel the rough texture of brick. I bit the inside of my cheek, mentally swearing at myself for backing away into a little crook out of view from the street.

"Oh, now you're claiming to be a psychic?" The first man reached out and grabbed my left upper arm, his grip sliding before clenching tighter, "...well, look at this."

My eyes darted down to see what he was gawking at, sucking in a breath when a nasty bruise revealed itself on my left collarbone from underneath the wide neck hem...the same area that Jyushimatsu had bit. While the hickies had healed in the last five days, the bitemarks barely began to bruise.

"Oh, shit. If you were busy working the streets, you should've waited until a little later," The second man licked his upper lip, leaning close while the first positioned himself between me and the small gap leading back to the sidewalk, "What're your prices?"

"Stop!" I cried out as one of the men grabbed my right forearm, pulling it close to his chest while the other refused to let go. My shirt was stretched thin, revealing more than I ever wanted to to men that I didn't know, "

Poli--!

"

A hand smothered my shout, the tears that had rested in my eyes now spilled forth with abandon while my heart raced a mile a second.

I had to fight. I had to get out on my own power.

The brothers were far away with Totoko, tending to her wants.

No one else was going to help me.

The thought stilled my mind, my gaze clouding over as reality crashed down around me, grabbing me by the waist and shoving me--

No, wait...

Reality wasn't a man dressed in red uppercutting the stranger pulling at my shirt. Reality wasn't a second man dressed in yellow roundhouse kicking the assaulter holding my arms. Reality wasn't the man in blue bringing me close when I stumbled forward.

"(Y/n), you're going to be okay," Karamatsu's voice was gentle as his hand pushed my hair away from my face before placing his sunglasses over my eyes, "Keep these safe for me."

I felt myself placed into waiting arms, yet another man cradling me tightly.

The purple jacket was hard to see through the dark sunglasses.

"What the hell is going on?" A female's voice sounded close, her tone annoyed.

"Sorry, Totoko..." The person's chest rumbled with the words, "We saw someone close to us get attacked...we couldn't just stand by."

"Hnhh?"

Two more pairs of hands steadied me before a warmth was wrapped around my shoulders and chest, Ichimatsu standing in front of me with only his white undershirt visible. His hands lifted from my shoulders as my trembling fingers clutched at the new addition of warmth, feeling the soft jacket fabric under my fingertips and pulling it as tight as I could around me.

"(Y/n)...?" I heard my name from somewhere next to me, mindlessly looking over to see a worried Todomatsu wipe something off my face with a handkerchief, "Hey, you're okay now. No need to cry."

Karamatsu's sunglasses were briefly lifted from my face, the handkerchief catching more tears at the source before Todomatsu's hands cupped my cheeks while the worry spread further in his expression.

"What about the others?" The sixth brother, Choromatsu, questioned as he stepped up to Totoko, her dominant position between the fight across the street and myself.

"What

about

the others," Her tongue clicked against her cheek, "Those pieces of shit will pay."

My gaze fell to my feet as my legs gave out on me, Todomatsu barely catching me in time before lowering me to a sitting position.

This was the worst-case scenario, apologies flowing from my mouth as tears fell from my eyes.

I had interrupted Totoko's shopping...I had diverted the sextuplets' attention from her...

"Oy!" She screamed at the top of her lungs, her heels clicking against the asphalt, "You've done enough damage!"

My panicked breathing refused to slow, my jaw tight as the wind whistled through my teeth.

I felt someone kneel behind me, their arms bringing me close as they held me in a tender grip, "No one's going to hurt you here, (y/n)..."

The dark voice held some concern, his volume a near whisper in my ear.

"No man will touch you like that when we're around."

A light kiss against my neck disguised as a nuzzle, their head remaining after they pulled their lips away.

"You know them...you know how furious those three get when someone hurts a person they care for...Those creeps won't look at you ever again."

I was able to take a deep breath, then another. With whatever strength I had left, I pressed my cheek against their head in gratitude. When I showed that I could breathe normally, Ichimatsu finally released me from his hold as our eyes made contact through the sunglasses.

His lips held a rare smile.

"--now you assholes are gonna tell me what the hell that was all about!" Totoko's shout came closer, three men grunting in pain as their ears were fiercely held in her grip. She only let go of them when she stood in front of me, "Starting with you."

I swallowed harshly, Karamatsu's sunglasses barely slipping down the bridge of my nose as our eyes met.

"Totoko, this is (y/n)," Osomatsu ran interference as he massaged his bruised ear, stretching out his back for a moment before he realized he had her attention, "She's a close friend from high school before she moved away before graduation. She recently moved back to town and we reconnected this past week."

Totoko's brown eyes lowered back down to me.

I gently nodded, raising a hand to lift the sunglasses from my eyes and pushing them onto my head, "My family had moved overseas a few months before our class was to graduate, so I wanted to find my classmates again when I came back. I ran into Osomatsu at a pachinko parlor near here and he re-introduced me to Karamatsu."

Her right eyebrow lifted. I couldn't tell if it was in suspicion or belief.

After what felt like an hour, she lowered her hand down and supported my right arm while indicating I should stand. Her strength was surprising to feel, but I was back on my feet with her own arm hooking around mine.

"Get her stuff," Totoko ordered with a natural command, Osomatsu and Jyushimatsu stiffening up before rushing to grab the phone and wallet I had dropped on the opposite sidewalk, "A friend of the Matsuno's is a friend of mine, (y/n). I'm sorry that you had to deal with

that

in your first month back. I can promise that it's not the norm here."

Relief flooded through my nerves as she cast a gentle smile to me, her words ending in a light laugh.

"I guess shopping will be postponed until next month...oh well, I'll just have to buy double to make up for it!"

Her hearty laugh was echoed by light groans from the sextuplets.

Totoko gently ran my brush through my hair, a few bobby pins pinched between her lips as she tugged some loose hairs into a preferred position before cinching them into place with the pins. She pulled some thick parts of hair taut before tying them up into a ponytail, brushing out the lower layers of hair before holding the ponytail gathering.

She ran her fingers through my hair once more before starting to braid them together, each gathering feeding into something larger that I couldn't really feel on my scalp.

I had given her free reign for styling my hair however she wanted, refusing to look at a mirror until she was sure that she was finished.

"All done!" Her hands pressed on my shoulders as I cautiously looked up from the desk I had been sitting at, my eyes widening in surprise, "What do you think?"

Totoko held an opposing mirror, fully revealing the half-dutch braid that she had styled. I was surprised by how painless the process was despite how

tight the braid appeared to be, my left hand slowly lifting up and gingerly touching some of the loops within the hairstyle.

"Oh, wow, Totoko...this looks really good."

"I've always wanted to try braiding hair, but I've never had a guinea pig to try it on!" She giggled, lowering the smaller mirror and sitting on her bed close by.

"Gonna try it on yourself?" I turned to follow her movements.

"Of course not," A light frown pulled at her lips as she lifted her nose into the air, the haughty look familiar to me, "My hairstyle is too cute to not do every day."

"Well, if you want to try any other hairstyle, you're welcome to call on me," I offered a genuine smile while my eyes closed, "I don't mind this."

A knock sounded on her closed bedroom door, the lever handle turning before the wooden boundary opened a little.

"Oh, Choromatsu," Totoko responded to the unasked question, standing from the bed as the nervous sextuplet stepped inside her room. My eyes caught the clipboard holding some kind of paperwork before his eyes caught my gaze, an uncertain flush coloring his cheeks, "I didn't think you'd be this early."

"I thought it would be okay. If you're busy, I can always come back."

"No, I was about to leave," I stood up from the desk, catching Totoko off-guard as I offered a reassuring smile, "Text me whenever you want, Totoko. I'll respond when I can."

"Are you sure you don't want an escort?" Her brow pinched in worry.

"Not this time. I promise to be aware of my surroundings this time."

"Have a good day, Ms. (l/n)," Choromatsu gave a small bow as I closed the bedroom door behind me, making my way through the upper floor of the

fish store that Totoko's family ran. Waving farewell to her parents, I strolled down the street with a smile on my face.

It had been a few days since the thug incident, my mental state slowly recovering from the blow it had taken when everything crumbled.

Totoko stayed with me when she brought me back to her place, the brothers remaining close by to help with whatever they could until they were sent running by her demand for space. She had helped me unwind for the rest of the day, apologizing and taking measures to make sure that I was comfortable.

The shirt was ruined by how stretched it had become, the article instantly thrown out as soon as it left my body. Totoko had replaced it with another shirt that was of a similar style, the color something I still enjoyed wearing. She told me to keep it as a gift, to which I gladly accepted.

I had spent the night at her place, feeling better by the next morning.

It was only then that the older two sextuplets were allowed into Totoko's house, both of them easily dividing their attention between the two of us as they apologized for what happened. That night was a large dinner gathering between the Matsuno brothers, Totoko, and myself at Chibita's oden stand, the balding man enjoying the large crowd that could pay its tab.

Ichimatsu was the one to walk me home that night, and Jyushimatsu had escorted me to Totoko's house for the day.

I was confident that I'd be okay today, the actions of those close to me soothing my fears that I had messed up the relationships of everyone.

Totoko wasn't angry at me for being close with the brothers.

The Matsunos weren't ignoring Totoko when I was present in the same room.

I felt included in their world.

It was...nicer than I imagined.

The vibrating in my pocket distracted me from my thoughts, pulling out the cell phone to see a text from Todomatsu's number that asked for my presence at the Matsuno house. Sending an acknowledgement, I diverted from my path to my apartment.

It was a short walk to their house, the familiar faded blue shingles that appeared green peered between the two commercial buildings holding businesses: a relic of the Japanese Shōwa era that still hung on through today's Reiwa era.

Comfortably walking past the open gate, I knocked twice on the front door--

"(Y/n)!" Jyushimastu instantly slammed the sliding door open, the loud noise making me flinch a little, "You're here!"

"You guys asked me to come," My right hand was grabbed by his, dragged through the open doorway before being brought into a close hug as the door closed behind me. My face was smushed against his shoulder, "What's going on?"

"Totty has questions for you!"

"And why couldn't he--" I was yanked by the hyper yellow brother from the front area, barely kicking off my sandals in time before stepping onto the wooden floorboards. He laughed as he pulled me up the stairs leading to their bedroom, slamming the door open again and shoving me into the room, "...huh."

"Ugh...I really didn't think he'd do that," Todomatsu looked down from his phone, completely laying flat on the green sofa with the device held above his head. He looked back at his phone when he took in the new changes of his surroundings, "Well, welcome to the house, (y/n)."

The brown beanie was lopsided on his head, his white socked feet propped up on one of the cushions as his knees slowly moved side to side, Todomatsu's free hand playing with one of the strings from his pink-stained hood.

"Thanks," The door closing drew my attention behind me, seeing Jyushimatsu offer an innocent smile, "I think. Where's everyone else?"

"Out," The string became pinched between his lips.

"That's a surprise..." With the sofa clearly taken by the youngest brother, I moved towards the bookcase in curiosity. The anime had never really shown what was stored there.

"Why's that?"

"You're usually out and about town, Todomatsu," I avoided using the nickname his family had given him, "Never expected to see you here with only Jyushimatsu."

"Maybe today was my day to relax," I heard the irritation in his voice.

"I meant no offense," Turning around while raising my hands to head level in surrender, I could only offer a smile as the youngest narrowed a glare at me.

"I may have heard endless things about you from my brothers, but why are you so familiar with

me

?"

Ah...

"Well, I know quite a few things about you. Why don't you try testing me?" I moved to the middle of the room, seeing the excitement oozing from Jyushimatsu from the corner of my eye, "If I get something wrong, I take a step towards the door. If I get ten things wrong, I leave."

Todomatsu's eyes hooded further, the string falling from his lips as the phone was lowered onto his stomach.

"What happens if you get everything right?"

"Dealer's choice?" I shrugged, "I'm up for most things."

"For every two questions you get right, you take a step closer to the couch," The glint in Todomatsu's eyes was intoxicating, his figure shifting to fully sit upright in the middle of the sofa.

There were about five small steps between us.

I instantly knew what game he was playing, wearing a naïve expression while eyeing him coyly, "Okay. What's the first question?"

"When's the last time I wore my blue suit?"

"Two weeks ago when you went to the unemployment department," I had seen them all enter while complaining about being kicked off the streaming website yet again.

"Lucky guess. Where's one of the places I go when I'm not with my brothers?"

"The gym."

He disappointedly huffed as he nodded. I took a step forward.

"What's one of my biggest accomplishments?"

"Climbing Mt. Fuji."

His eyes grew wide, shaking his head to snap himself out of some thought before lowering his gaze back to me, "Which of my brothers do I like the most?"

I offered a smirk, "It depends on which brother is asking you."

The frown was back on Todomatsu's face, giving another nod that allowed me to step closer.

"What game do I like playing?"

I pursed my lips in thought, unsure if he was meaning Mahjong or Go. Hell, it could mean mental games with Todomatsu, too.

"You play Mahjong with your brothers, but also like playing Go."

"Close enough. Since you seem to know so much...what's my favorite kink?" The confident smirk rested proudly on his cat-like lips, his eyes hooded to match the smug expression.

"Belly button wrinkles," I answered immediately, thriving on the dismayed look that dashed the confidence of the youngest brother. My eyes hooded as an intrusive thought settled deep in my mind, my hands lightly lifting up the bottom hem of my shirt to reveal skin just below my navel, "...want to see mine?"

A furious blush swept across Todomatsu's face before my hands were smothered by someone else's hands, pulling both my arms and shirt above my breasts.

"Ah, Jyushi--!" I cried out in surprise before the hyper brother pulled my waded shirt length into my mouth, smothering his name before clamping his hands down on each breast, his fingers trying to pinch the nipples through the bra cups. Effectively gagged with my own clothing, I clenched my jaw as Jyushimatsu's tongue danced on my neck over where he had previously left hickies and bite marks.

His firm member pressed hard against my clothed butt.

"Wha--" Todomatsu seemed just as surprised as me at the sudden action before collecting himself, shifting off of the sofa and kneeling right in front of me. I could feel his breath dance across my exposed belly before something wet traced the skin near my belly button, "Keep her busy, big brother. She should be punished for teasing me like that."

Jyushimatsu hummed an agreement against my skin before one of his hands released a breast, tracing my torso down to my hips and plunging beneath the waistline of my sweatpants. Two fingers brushed against my awakening

bud of nerves before curling around and pushing into my entrance, drawing a groan from my throat with each movement of his fingers.

One of Todomatsu's hands lifted to tease the untouched breast, finding the aroused nipple under the material and pinching it lightly while his other hand swept around my waist to pull me closer to him. His tongue and teeth explored the skin and rim of my belly button, the sensation not entirely unpleasant for me.

The cloth gag in my mouth muffled most of the pitiful whines I tried to make while both men explored my body, my hands stuck over my head by how Jyushimatsu had tied the shirt. A soft cry sounded when Jyushimatsu had decided I had enough foreplay, his hand pulling out of my entrance and yanking down the sweatpants to my knees before his wet fingers danced around my butt.

There wasn't much time between the finger-rimming and Jyushimatsu shoving his hardened length fully into me, the action still painful despite his learned attempts this time.

I only heard Todomatsu scoff before his breath flowed down to my entrance, his lips kissing my lower pair as his tongue swiped across the trembling outer folds. Another swipe and his tongue pressed in a little more, licking across my clit deftly before creating a complimentary pace with Jyushi's frantic thrusting.

My sweatpants were pulled off completely before I felt two hands grip each leg just above the knee, a cry of surprise smothered as I was lifted off the ground with my back pressed against Jyushimatsu's chest and openly presented to Todomatsu, my legs bent at the knee and spread wide to reveal my core.

"...well, someone's excited about this," Totty hummed against my clit, pulling himself away and standing up while unfastening his jeans.

What I was expecting was immediate penetration like Jyushimatsu.

What happened was a careful maneuvering to the sofa, Todomatsu sitting on the middle cushion and readying himself while staring right at me.

Jyushimatsu didn't move from his spot, his teeth grabbing at my shoulders, neck, back, anything he could nip and bite.

"Were you wanting something else, (y/n)?" Todomatsu's breathy question briefly ensnared my attention, his hand now pumping his hardening member. The flushed look on his face was arousing as hell, "I don't think you deserve this from me."

"Aha, she got tighter!" Jyushimatsu laughed around my skin in his mouth, rolling his hips with such force that the knot my shirt was tied in became loose and fell free from my mouth. My hands reached back and grabbed at his hair in fear of falling, "If you keep playing games, Totty, she's gonna be spent on me."

"Can't have that, can we?" The youngest sighed, barely raising his free hand in a beckoning motion. When we were close enough, my body was tipped forward and I caught myself from completely falling onto Totty, my knees on either side of his waist while my hands clung to the sofa back. His lips pressed gently against my chest as his free hand roughly pulled down one of the bra's cups, setting the breast free before his hand clenched it like a toy, "No...can't have our world traveler exhausted before we all get a taste."

With his hands now free, Jyushimatsu yanked down the other cup and gripped the soft mound between his fingers while his other hand scratched at my back, his thrusts increasing in pace once more.

I cried out as I felt Jyushimatsu unleash load after load inside of me, someone's fingers shoved into my mouth as a makeshift gag while my body became overheated from the intensity of the sex.

With each thrust of the fifth sextuplet's dick inside my butt, I was losing my mind more and more...until Todomatsu shoved himself deep within my wet core. I nearly screamed in ecstasy while slightly sucking on the person's fingers in my mouth, the digits playing with my tongue as the youngest

sextuplet chose a pace that was too slow for me to feel complete pleasure from.

I wanted him to go faster, to match the madness of Jyushimatsu's thrusts.

Todomatsu's mouth played with one of my breasts, ignoring my pleas.

"So this is what the noise was about..." A familiar voice called out from the doorway, barely grabbing my attention before a third orgasm rocked through Jyushimatsu's body and into my own.

"That's it...no more," Jyushimatsu panted breathlessly as he slowly pulled out, Todomatsu picking this exact moment to grab my hips and drive himself into me at a slightly faster pace while rolling his hips deep into my groin.

"You're the one that went maniacal on her," Totty scoffed before his attention was pulled to something behind me, my entrance cried out in pain as I felt someone else try to shove their member in, "Ahh! That hurts, asshole!"

"Oh, please," Osomatsu's arms cradled my back against his chest as his hands brought my head to look back towards him, his lips catching mine in a deep kiss before his member slipped completely inside, "She likes it."

My mind nearly went blank from the double penetration, mindlessly kissing Osomatsu while Todomatsu suckled my breasts, both men riding two different rhythms. I had never done this before, but the sensation wasn't painful at all. Two dicks inside the same hole created a different kind of full feeling that I wouldn't be against having again.

Todomatsu barely sped up before his warmth spilled into my womb, his teeth fiercely grabbing hold of my skin and leaving harsh marks that were sure to leave ugly bruises.

I could only moan into Osomatsu's mouth as the men played with my body, each breast having a mouth tease and play with the nipple, fingers lightly

ghosting over my skin, hands gripping my legs and arms to position me in any posture they desired.

Eventually, I found myself sandwiched between Jyushimatsu's and Osomatsu's chest while my left arm helped prop me on my side, the rough carpet fibers brushing against the length of my left side. My head was being held by two gentle hands while my tongue poked and prodded a hardening member in my mouth, the push and pull soft compared to the two already inside me.

My gaze shifted up to make eye contact with a heated Ichimatsu, his face flush and his mouth open in pleasure as he continued to thrust into my mouth.

My skin was hot, slick with sweat as Ichimatsu's face scrunched up, a warmth flooding my mouth and throat while the sensation was mirrored by the other two. Mindlessly, I swallowed the thick substance and began cleaning off Ichimatsu's dick before it was pulled from my mouth.

"You're back early," Osomatsu breathed down my neck before his tongue swiped against it, drawing a heated moan from my throat.

"...why am I not surprised to find you like

that

," Surprised to hear someone come in without my notice, my eyes met Karamatsu's in a needy stare, "The room reeks, by the way."

"We can...air it out afterwards," Osomatsu grunted as another orgasm spread its warmth inside me. I couldn't count how many times the brothers had dumped their load, but my brain was so sex-fueled that I didn't care.

"I can't believe you pieces of shit."

A new voice captured my attention, drawing my gaze from the heated yet annoyed expression on Jyushimatsu's face to see a similar look on the third

sextuplet's face, the back of one of his hands pressed near his lips as our eyes met.

"It's not like you haven't fantasized about this, Choromatsu," I heard Todomatsu call out from somewhere in the room, "We've all heard you calling (y/n)'s name when you think we're asleep."

The furious shade of red instantly covered Choromatsu's face as the hand dropped from its shielding position, his eyes darting between myself and Jyushimatsu pulling out to take a third or fourth break.

"This...this isn't right, guys," He huffed as he tried to take a step towards the doorway, his fist clenched tightly.

"If it's not right, then why are you hard?" Osomatsu ensured that I felt him still within me, drawing a cry before our lips connected in a passionate kiss.

The move seemed to both entice and enrage Choromatsu.

"Did you guys need to leave so many marks on her?" Karamatsu knelt down near my head, his hands gently holding my head to look up at his as Osomastu released my lips. The second-eldest's eyes were partially worried, "What will you do if she can't go to work?"

"I can...take the day off," Words tumbled from my lips, a heated moan sounding between them before Karamatsu's fingers danced over my lips. It was only then that I could feel how swollen and tender they were.

"You bruise as easily as a flower, my Karamatsu girl," He leaned down further and softly kissed me on the cheek, "I promise to be tender."

He had somehow freed his swelling member during the kiss, his position clearly indicating what he wanted me to do.

I pressed my lips against the hot skin of his length, laying a chaste kiss on it before taking him in my mouth completely. Karamatsu refrained from making any noise as his hand ran through my sweat-coated hair, brushing out some of the clumps gently while I tended to him.

"Why did you join?!" Choromatsu cried out in surprise, "This is ridiculous."

"Oh, shut up, Fappymatsu. You're ruining the atmosphere here," Ichimatsu growled out, "Either participate or get the fuck out."

I only heard frustrated mumbling as more clothing rustled, focusing on Karamatsu's gentle touch while Osomatsu's seed filled my stretched womb. The oldest completely withdrew with a content sigh, allowing my body to feel some iota of peace from the abuse it had received since Jyushimatsu first penetrated me today.

There was no notion of time dragging on nor any care of it flying by.

I was living in the moment between their touches, kisses, and intercourse.

Any remaining fear that I had of them not tolerating me was dashed to pieces when I was pulled up into a seated position, mentally acknowledging that the third-eldest decided to participate by laying between my legs. Karamatsu had allowed me to get comfortable with the new position before offering himself to my mouth once more.

I took him orally as Choromatsu pushed inside my trembling entrance, my inner walls quivering by the repeated attention and exhaustion threatening to drag me down from this sexual high.

Someone spoke quietly before my lips became more stretched, my hands suddenly occupied and my butt straining from the new attention.

Karamatsu and Osomatsu stood in front of me, both of their members pressing against each other in my mouth. Todomatsu and Jyushimatsu thrummed in my hands before I began lavishing them with attention. Choromatsu rolled his hips over and over while Ichimatsu picked a rhythm off-beat from his, acting like pistons in a car to keep me consistently full.

A six-on-one scenario -- my sex fantasy with the six brothers.

Jyushimatsu came first, his semen spilling over my right arm and hand.

Ichimatsu rammed harshly into me before his orgasm overflowed into me.

Todomatsu's dick trembled before he released a high-pitched whine, his seed not projecting as far as Jyushimatsu's on my left hand and wrist.

The older three seemed to be in a contest of sorts, like the last one to finish was the winner of this orgy.

I didn't care.

I tended to their dicks as well as I could, each hand now teasing and playing with the older two's ballsacks, licking and sucking on their members in my mouth.

Osomatsu gave a short teeth gnash before his load exploded, followed very shortly by Karamatsu as I closed my throat. I didn't want to breathe the stuff in and cough all over the brothers, slightly shuddering at the feeling of hot, thick seed dripping down my chin and onto my breasts.

Choromatsu, however, was still going strong underneath me as his dark hues locked onto my form straddling his waist.

I grabbed my shirt to clean off my face and spit out what was in my mouth, meeting his heated gaze when I deemed myself 'clean' enough, "Are you gonna give it to me or not?"

His eyes became hazed, less focused, yet the deliberate pace continued. My eyes partially narrowed as a small teasing smile pulled at my lips.

"Don't tell me that my little Froggy is scared of me?"

The question caused him to buck a little harder, his fingers digging into the fleshy part of my thighs. I gave a wicked sneer while leaning forward, pressing my hands into the carpet on either side of his head and intentionally using my upper arms to press my breasts together.

"My little Froggy boy," I could see the stars explode behind his eyes, "Finish for me, or I won't let you have this again."

The threat caused his rhythm to become frantic, his bottom lip pulling up over his top lip as the familiar whine sounded from his throat. I didn't show

that his fingernails were really painful as they dug deep into my skin, reveling in the panic that he was going through.

"I guess you don't want this enough," I sat back up, my breasts jostled by his movement, "Well, then--"

My words were smothered by one of Choromatsu's hands, his grip tight around my jaw as he pulled me back down before his lips sucked harshly on my right earlobe. A moan pressed against his palm, the sound spurring on his orgasm as his warm seed shot deep into my tired womb.

A roll of his hips as he released his grip on my waist and jaw. Another to expel anything left in his system. A third to draw out a cry from me.

"You...really pressed my buttons..." His voice was rough, sucking in deep breaths as he panted beneath me.

"I know I did," I kissed him on the cheek softly before climbing off of him.

"My turn!" Jyushimatsu cried out before I was knocked onto my knees, my hands reaching out to use the sofa for stability as he pushed himself back inside me. The action was apparently what the other brothers were waiting for, each of them filling a hole or hand that I had free.

When I regained my bearings, I was laying on their futon and nestled under the duvet as the men lay on either side of me. My body was covered by a spare pajama set and my hands were folded over one another.

"There you are," Todomatsu spoke softly next to me, drawing the sextuplets' attention from their various bedtime habits, "Sorry about that."

"I mean...you guys didn't leave me in a ditch somewhere, so I don't mind," My voice sounded strained.

"We'd never do that to you, (y/n)," Osomatsu wrapped an arm around my waist as he dragged me close to him, the move protested by Karamatsu and Jyushimatsu.

"We'll take care of you for the night," Choromatsu offered as his fingers brushed against my cheek, shifting my focus from the oldest who

clearly

was ready for round whatever-the-fuck-it-was-since-the-afternoon, "It's the least we can do for you."

"You don't have to be this nice to me, guys."

"Why not?" Ichimatsu sat up and looked at me over Karamatsu's and Todomatsu's figures.

"You're not a secret alien experimenting on us, are you?"

"You're certainly not out to use us for crimes," Osomatsu's breath caressed my ear.

"I just don't want to force myself into your world."

I could feel six pairs of eyes staring into my soul, quickly glancing around to see each brother holding an emotionless stare.

"(Y/n)...we had

sex

."

"It was more like

we

forced ourselves on

you

," Choromatsu tried to laugh.

"You're a very interesting person, (y/n), and we want to get to know you more without sex being the only defining feature of our friendship," Karamatsu nodded as Ichimatsu mirrored his action.

"Not that it was a bad thing," The eldest tightened his grip on me as his hand slipped lower on my waist.

"No...not now, Osomatsu," I groaned pathetically, desperately wanting rest from anything sexually related.

His hand was ripped away from my body as someone else cradled my exhausted form, Todomatsu adjusting his position between myself and Osomatsu. I could see Osomatsu wrestling with Jyushimatsu beyond his shoulder.

"Rest now," Karamatsu's hold was gentle as Ichimatsu reached over to brush aside some stray hairs that had settled over my face, "We'll address rules for our relationship in the morning when we're well rested."

I nodded against his chest as I felt Todomatsu place a hand on my back, as if trying to assure me that nothing would happen.

Nothing else did.